

Compromise or Coercion:

Conceptualizing Experiences of Conceding to Unwanted Sexual Activity

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Abstract

Sometimes individuals are talked into sexual behavior that—at least initially—they did not want. Sometimes, these situations are conceptualized as compromise; sometimes, they are conceptualized as verbal sexual coercion. The purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence of such experiences among young adults and to identify factors that differ between situations experienced as generally positive or generally negative.

Participants—150 female, 122 male, and 2 gender-variant undergraduates—completed an online questionnaire about conceding to unwanted sexual activity (CUSA), operationally defined as “a situation in which you initially did not want to engage in a sexual activity, but someone talked you into it.” They answered questions about two such experiences: one about which they felt generally positive and one about which they felt generally negative. Using quantitative and qualitative data, we compared relationship and situational characteristics that differentiated between their positive and negative CUSA experiences.

Results showed that 42% of women, 34% of men, and neither gender-variant respondent reported positive experiences; 33% of women, 16% of men, and both gender-variant respondents reported negative experiences. Some respondents reported mixed feelings, reporting some negative feelings about generally positive situations and vice versa.

There were several significant differences between respondents’ positive and negative experiences. Women’s negative situations were more likely than their positive situations to have involved someone they had been “talking” to or casually dating, possibly because of relationship expectations or how much the other person had tried to please them.

Positive and negative situations were similar in whether they had involved positively-framed verbal approaches (e.g., saying it would be fun or good for the relationship). Negative

situations were more likely than positive situations to have involved negatively-framed verbal approaches (e.g., attempts to make respondents feel guilty or inadequate; asking repeatedly so that it was easier just to give in).

This study highlights that conceding to initially unwanted sexual activity could be experienced as positive, negative, or both. Conceding in order to avoid unpleasantness was especially likely to be experienced as negative. These results have implications for clinical practice, research, and sexual coercion prevention efforts, especially among college-age populations.

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Compromise or Coercion:

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Overview

Relationships require compromise. This statement is frequently offered as advice for dealing with romantic relationship challenges. It certainly makes sense in light of the many everyday decisions couples must agree upon (e.g., what restaurant to go to for dinner, whose family they will visit for an upcoming holiday, etc.). These decisions require compromise when partners differ in their desires. Healthy, successful relationships generally involve each partner feeling that their needs are being met fairly equally across time. Though sometimes both partners' needs are met simultaneously, other times one partner compromises in order to fulfill the other's needs. Sometimes, however, giving in to a partner can feel coercive. What determines whether giving in feels like compromise or coercion? Are there factors about the relationship or during the sexual encounter that are associated with differing reactions? What role does the outcome of the sexual encounter play?

These questions relate to how people conceptualize their experiences. Partners sometimes differ in their desires for sexual activity, where one partner may desire a greater level of activity than the other. In those cases, sexual activity sometimes does not occur. Other times, sexual activity occurs after one person talks the other into engaging in it. In a previous study (Mustapha & Muehlenhard, 2015), we found that people have varying conceptualizations of their experiences of having been talked into sexual activity. Some people conceptualize their experience as relationship compromise, while others conceptualize it as coercive. It is therefore important to explore factors that are associated with how people conceptualize and react to experiences of being talked into sexual activity for which they previously expressed a lack of

desire. I will use the term conceding to unwanted sexual activity (CUSA) to refer to these experiences, whether they are conceptualized as relationship compromise or as verbal sexual coercion.

Conceptualizing Relationship Compromise

Some people may conceptualize their experiences with CUSA as a compromise. They may view this compromise in sexual activity similarly to compromises they make in other aspects of their relationships. Therefore, studies examining strategies of compromise in relationships and couples' decision-making in nonsexual contexts are relevant.

Oriña, Wood, and Simpson (2002) examined the ways in which close relationship partners influence one another during discussions of relationship problems. The researchers examined a three-part model of influencing attitude change:

Compliance occurs when people agree with others to gain a favorable reaction from them or to avoid an unfavorable one. This form of influence arises from concerns about the social consequences of agreeing or disagreeing with powerful others who can offer rewards and punishments. *Identification* is evident when people agree with valued others to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship with them. Consequently, identification-based influence promotes goals associated with forming or maintaining relationships and corresponding social identities. *Internalization* occurs when people agree with others because the attitude position itself (i.e., its content) is intrinsically logical, reasonable, or compelling. (p. 460)

The participants in this study were 123 dating couples with at least one partner enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a Texas university. The couples had to have been dating

for at least six months to participate in the study. The mean age for women was 18.9 years and the mean age for men was 19.6 years.

The study occurred in three phases. In Phase 1, participants completed the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollen, 1992). This scale assesses the extent to which people's self-concept includes their romantic partner. Subjective closeness was conceptualized as the overlap between self and partner. In Phase 2, five days later, participants were randomly assigned to identify and discuss either an ongoing major or minor relationship problem. The discussions were recorded and later coded in Phase 3 of the study. Both partners also reported on their affective reactions to the discussion (e.g., feeling upset or anxious) and their thoughts on the productivity of the discussion.

Oriña et al. (2002) expected identification to be the most common method of influence in close relationships due to the saliency of the relationship. Participants attempting to influence their partner with identification-based strategies were expected to discuss the relationship and its importance. This was termed *relationship referencing*. Their appeals were expected to focus on ideals and norms that support the relationship, such as "You should do this for the good of the relationship" (p. 460). Identification based strategies were expected to be most frequently used and most effective in relationships with subjective closeness than in those without.

They found that 68% of the women in the sample were coded as the partner who desired more change in the issue discussed in Phase 2. Men and women did not differ in their reports of subjective closeness to their partner. They also did not differ in how often they used relationship referencing to influence change. However women used significantly more negative compliance-based behaviors, termed *coercion*, than did men. Examples of this strategy included punishing, degrading, or expressing negative affect toward the partner. Men were significantly more likely

than women to be coded as having moved toward their partner's position. Oriña et al. (2002) also found support for their hypothesis that subjectively closer partners used relationship referencing more frequently than did less close partners. Another finding was that the more one person in the dyad used an influence strategy, the more their partner reciprocated with the same strategy.

Other studies have examined couples' decision-making in specific domains. For example, Bronner and de Hoog (2008) collected data from a sample of 240 Dutch households. They were interested in couples' decision-making regarding a family vacation. The couples were asked about various sub-decisions, including the places they would visit, how long they would stay on vacation, the vacation budget, and means of transportation. Participants responded to questions about each sub-decision, which included their own preferences, how important they considered the sub-decision, the relative influence of themselves, their partners, and their children (when applicable) on the decision, etc. In addition, participants were asked to indicate which of nine strategies of resolving disagreements most resembled their own.

Bronner and de Hoog (2008) expected that participants would most commonly report using the golden mean strategy for resolving discrepancies about the family vacation. This was described as "a strategy of give-and-take-and-reach-a-compromise: everyone gives up something and the golden mean is maintained" (p. 969). They expected this to be the most frequently used strategy due to the "configurability" (p. 969) of a family vacation. That term was used in this context to describe the flexibility a consumer has in configuring a product. In contrast, purchasing a car is less configurable when one person desires a small car and the other desires a large car. Compromising to purchase a medium-sized car might not satisfy either partner. The authors also discussed the concept of *time*—that is, how long the outcome of the decision will be

in effect. For example, for purchasing a car, time would refer to the length of time that the couple would keep the car.

Their hypothesis was supported; both male and female partners reported that they used the golden mean strategy most frequently. The second most common strategy was persuasion, in which one person attempts to convince another person to adopt their preference. Participants also provided data on the strategies they used when making joint purchases in other categories (e.g., buying a soft drink, opening a savings account, and buying shampoo). In general, couples used the golden mean strategy less often for purchases that are low in configurability and high on time commitment (e.g., buying a new car). In addition, the data on relative influence indicate that most couples, with and without children, reported that most vacation sub-decisions were joint ones.

Bronner and de Hoog's (2008) data on how configurability influences couples' decision-making strategies could be relevant to how couples address discrepancies in their desire for sexual activity. Though sexual activity is not a product in this context, strategies of resolving discrepancies may be similar. When someone does not want to engage in the sexual activity requested by the partner, it could be possible that some couples find a way to configure a solution that will be satisfactory to both.

Although these studies address compromise on nonsexual topics—where to go on vacation, which car to buy, or other issues—they illustrate that relationships involve compromise. In some cases, individuals might regard discrepancies in sexual desire as requiring similar types of compromises.

Defining Verbal Sexual Coercion

Other people may conceptualize their experiences of CUSA as coercive. Verbal sexual coercion (VSC) is a term that is sometimes used by researchers (e.g., Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004) to refer to a situation in which sexual activity was unwanted, but is eventually conceded to due to psychological pressure from a partner. It should be noted that though I will use the term verbal sexual coercion in this paper, researchers often use various terms to refer to the same behaviors. This is partly due to the fact that in most studies, VSC has been investigated along with other forms of sexual coercion (e.g., force or threats of force, incapacitation) as part of a larger pattern of sexual coercion or sexual assault. In this context, researchers have used alternative terms such as verbal tactics or sexual coercion in place of VSC. They then sometimes refer to physical forms of coercion as sexual aggression. The terms and definitions used by the researchers reviewed in this paper will be made explicit.

VSC tactics could include pouting, using insults, attempting to make the other person feel guilty or jealous, threatening to terminate the relationship, or using blackmail. Individuals who give in to VSC might eventually consent to unwanted sexual activity to escape partner pressure for sex and/or to avoid negative consequences (Livingston et al., 2004). Unlike situations that would meet the legal definition of rape in most states, VSC involves neither the use (or threat of use) of physical force, nor the use of substances, such as alcohol, as a means of obtaining sexual activity. Instead, those who are coerced submit to the unwanted sex for other reasons, such as ending partner pressure for sex, avoiding threatened negative consequences from continuing to refuse sexual activity (e.g., partner threatens to end the relationship or seek sexual activity outside of it), or to reduce partner-induced feelings of guilt (Livingston et al., 2004). Although, in comparing tactics used, VSC is not as severe as other sexually coercive acts that do involve

physical tactics, it is still a prevalent problem that can have detrimental effects on an individual's wellbeing (DeGue & DiLillo, 2005).

VSC Prevalence

Reported rates of VSC in the literature vary widely based on researchers' operational definitions. Unsurprisingly, lower prevalence rates are found in studies with narrower definitions of VSC that include fewer behaviors or tactics, compared with definitions that include a larger variety of verbal tactics. Below, I will review the literature on VSC. I will start with studies that included large, nationally representative samples. Then I will describe studies using smaller, more localized samples.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS; Black et al., 2011) was conducted by the CDC to assess women's and men's experiences with intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking. The data were collected from 9,970 women and 8,079 men in all 50 states and the District of Columbia through random digit dial telephone calls to both landlines and cellphones. The definition of sexual coercion used for the NISVS, is consistent with the definition of VSC in many other studies:

Unwanted vaginal, oral, or anal sexual penetration that occurs after a person is pressured in a nonphysical way, such as being worn down by someone who repeatedly asked for sex or showed they were unhappy; feeling pressured by being lied to, being told promises that were untrue, having someone threaten to end a relationship or spread rumors; and sexual pressure due to someone using their influence or authority. (NISVS; Black et al., 2011, p. 17)

Using this definition, Black et al. (2011) found that 13% of the women and 6% of the men reported having had a sexual coercion experience in their lifetime. In comparison, 18.3% of

women and 1.4% of men reported having had a rape experience, which was defined as completed or attempted penetration with the use of physical force or threats or the use of substances (p.17).

The Association of American Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct is a recently published project. The researchers collected data during the spring 2015 semester on “the incidence, prevalence, and characteristics of incidents sexual assault and sexual misconduct” (Cantor et al., 2015, p. iii) on the campuses of 27 institutions of higher education. A total of 150,072 undergraduates, graduate, and professional students (18 years and older) participated in the survey. In this survey, sexual coercion was defined as “involving threats of serious non-physical harm or promising rewards” (p. xi). Examples of harm included threats of assigning a bad grade and threats of sharing damaging information about the participant. Examples of rewards included promising good grades or promising a promotion (p. xi)

Using that definition, the researchers found low prevalence rates compared with other national surveys. In their sample, 0.4% of female students and 0.3% of male students reported having experienced sexual coercion since they began college. The contrasting data from these national surveys reflect the importance of researchers’ operational definitions. The definition in the AAU survey included only two tactics of sexual coercion, threats of punishment and promise of rewards. Three of the four examples used in the survey (i.e., assigning a bad grade, promising a good grade, or promising a promotion) can be carried out only by instructors or bosses. Thus, this definition is narrower than the definition used in other surveys like the NISVS, which included other tactics such as verbal pressure (e.g., pestering or verbal pressure), that may not be considered threatening.

Some smaller, localized studies also provide information on the prevalence of VSC, particularly among college samples. One such study by Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, and Anderson (2003) examined male and female university students' experiences as both targets and perpetrators of "tactics of postrefusal sexual persistence" (p. 78). This referred to behaviors used to pursue sexual contact with a person despite their refusal of a previous advance. According to this definition, a behavior that may not initially be coercive (e.g., attempting to remove a partner's clothing) would be considered coercive after the partner has expressed refusal. They examined four levels of sexually coercive tactics: Level 1, "nonverbal *sexual arousal tactics*," Level 2, "tactics of *emotional manipulation and lies*," Level 3, "tactics related to *alcohol and drug intoxication*," and Level 4, "*tactics of physical force and harm*" (pp. 78–79). Level 2 is the most relevant to the current study. This category was described as using emotional and/or manipulative tactics (e.g., questioning the person's sexual orientation or making repeated requests) to induce verbal or psychological pressure. The questions in this category asked students about their experiences with eight tactics: repeatedly asking, telling lies, using authority of older age, questioning target's sexuality, threatening to break up, using authority of position, threatening self-harm, and threatening blackmail (p. 80).

Of the 656 undergraduate students in their sample, 71% of women and 44% of men reported having been a target of Level 2 sexual coercion. Receiving repeated requests and being told lies were the most frequently reported tactics. For participants who reported perpetrating sexual coercion, 22% reported using verbal and emotional tactics, with repeated requests as the most common tactic. There was a gender difference in perpetration of Level 2 sexual coercion: 32% of men and 15% of women reported having used verbal tactics to obtain sexual contact with

an unwilling person. In comparison, experiencing sexual coercion involving physical tactics was less common for both women (30%) and men (25%) in that sample.

Though much of the research focuses on women's experiences with being verbally coerced, men also experience VSC. Overall, the gender differences in prevalence rates of VSC follow the pattern of reported rates of other forms of sexual coercion. That is, women generally report more experiences as victims of sexual coercion, than do men, though both men and women report experiencing coercion.

VSC Reactions and Correlates

Individuals' reactions to experiencing any form of sexual coercion vary. That is, for some individuals, sexual coercion can be a traumatic experience associated with many negative outcomes (see Breitenbecher, 2006; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Offman & Matheson, 2004, for examples). Conversely, in some other studies (e.g., Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; Mustapha & Muehlenhard, 2015) have found that *some* coerced individuals report minimal or no adverse reactions to their experiences. Several factors, including gender of both the target and initiator of coercion, have been studied for their influence on an individual's reactions following sexual coercion.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994) examined men's experiences with pressured and forced sexual activity initiated by both women and men. The sample consisted of 204 undergraduate male students between the ages of 18 and 46 ($M = 21.8$) at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. Most of the men (96%) identified as heterosexual. The researchers defined sexual coercion as "an experience of being pressured or forced by another person to have contact which involved touching of sexual parts or sexual intercourse – oral, anal, or vaginal" (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994, p. 96). They used the term

pressured contact to refer to experiences of sexual coercion that occurred due to the use of psychological coercion such as verbal persuasion, bribery, threats to withdraw love, and intoxication. In contrast, *forced contact* referred to sexual coercion that occurred due to the use of physical tactics such as physical restraint or physical harm. Participants were asked to report their experiences of pressured or forced sexual contact by someone of the opposite sex or someone of the same sex since the age of 16. Participants also reported on whether they perceived the coercion to have had a negative effect on them and completed a scale assessing their sexual well-being.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994) found that 34% reported having been sexually coerced at least once. Of their total sample, 24% of the men reported only female-initiated coercive sexual contact, 4% reported only male-initiated coercive sexual contact, and 6% reported coercive sexual contact initiated by both sexes; 12% of the reported experiences involved only sexual touching, and 22% involved intercourse (vaginal, oral, or anal), often accompanied by sexual touching. The most common experiences reported by men (reported by 23% of the entire sample) involved coerced sexual touching by women. Also common was coerced intercourse initiated by a woman, which 20% of the participants reported. Generally (in 77% of the cases), men were coerced by someone they knew (i.e., an acquaintance or intimate friend), rather than by a stranger.

Men were most commonly coerced with the use of persuasion (78%) or intoxication (43%). For the cases of female-initiated coercive sexual contact, 42% of the men reported that persuasion was the only tactic used. In their interview data, these men specified that the women used constant pressure, nagging, pleading, and attempted to induce guilt by accusing the man of not finding her desirable. Intoxication and withdrawing love were the other common tactics for

female-initiated sexual coercion. For the cases of male-initiated coercive sexual contact, 35% of the men reported that persuasion was the only tactic used. Often, persuasion was used in combination with intoxication, such as in the cases of heterosexual men who reported drinking with a homosexual or bisexual friend or acquaintance who asked them to engage in oral sex to “try it out” or to prove their friendship (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994, p. 104).

Participants’ reactions to their coercion experiences were assessed with a measure of their sexual well-being as well as their subjective reports of negative impact. Overall, there were no statistically significant differences in the sexual well-being of sexually coerced men and noncoerced men.

When asked to indicate the extent to which they were negatively impacted by their coercive experience, many men (47%) reported little to no negative impact when a female partner coerced them. In contrast, 23% of the men coerced by women reported strong negative reactions to their experiences. Nearly all of the men in this group reported being pressured into sexual intercourse by a female partner they knew. For example, some of these men reported that their girlfriend made them feel guilty by accusing him of not desiring sex or desiring her.

Men generally reported being more negatively impacted by their experiences when coerced by other men than when they were coerced by women. These incidents of male-initiated coercive contact were reported to have had greater negative impact when the incident involved physical restraint and/or unexpected approaches when the participant was intoxicated or asleep. The coercive men in those cases were largely acquaintances, rather than people the male participants knew well.

Zweig, Barber, and Eccles (1997) also examined gender differences in the association between sexual coercion and psychological and social well-being. The participants in this study were 872 women and 527 men between the ages of 19 and 22. The researchers were also interested in how college enrollment influenced well-being after a coercion experience. So, the sample consisted of both college and noncollege participants. The data for this study were collected as part of a larger, 13-year longitudinal study that began in 1983.

Zweig, Barber, and Eccles (1997) defined sexual coercion broadly to refer to one of four experiences involving unwanted or nonconsensual sex: pressured sex, rape, sexual abuse, and sexual assault. The most relevant of these categories for the purposes of this paper, was pressured sex. Participants were asked to indicate on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always*), “How often does it (sex) happen because you are pressured into it”? (p. 295). If participants responded 2 through 6, indicating that it happened “once in a while” or more often, they were coded as having experienced pressured sex. The researchers’ vague question about sexual coercion (i.e., “because you are pressured into it”) is an important methodological difference from more recent research in which researchers inquired about the occurrence of specific behaviors (e.g., partner threatened to seek sexual activity outside the relationship), rather than ask participants to indicate experience with a general term that may be interpreted broadly.

Participant well-being was measured with 44 questions beginning “How often do you...” (p. 295) on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*). The questions assessed self-esteem, depressed mood, social isolation, social anxiety, anger, and coping. For example, one question about self-esteem asked how often participants “feel satisfied with yourself the way you are.” Another question about social isolation asked how often participants “feel you are no longer close to anyone.”

Zweig et al. (1997) also found gender differences in the well-being of the coerced participants. Men who were coerced reported experiencing more anger, but more coping, than coerced women. In contrast, women who were coerced reported greater levels of depressed mood than coerced men. The researchers also compared participants' well-being as a function of coercion tactic. Women who experienced pressured sex reported higher levels of social anxiety and depressed mood than those who were not coerced and those who were coerced with violence. Pressured women also reported that they experienced higher levels of anger than did noncoerced women. Men who experienced violent coercion reported higher levels of depressed mood and anger than men who were not coerced or those who were coerced with verbal pressure.

In a more recent study, Kernsmith and Kernsmith (2009) also examined gender differences in individuals' reactions to sexual coercion. Participants were 732 undergraduate students from two Midwest universities ranging from 18 to 50 years old ($M = 20.6$). The researchers used the term *sexual coercion*, rather than VSC specifically, to refer to sexual activity that occurs due to the use of verbal tactics such as inducing guilt, manipulating the other person, and verbal bullying after one partner has expressed refusal for a sexual act that the other partner desired.

They found that 48% of female and 36% of male participants reported having experienced these types of coercion. They also found some gender differences among the coerced participants. Compared with men, women were more likely to experience the verbal tactics of lies (e.g., someone "telling them what they want to hear," p. 905) and obligation (e.g., a partner insisting that the participant owes them the sexual activity because they are a tease or because they are in a serious relationship). There were no gender differences in other VSC

tactics. There were, however, differences in men's and women's emotional reactions to their coercion experiences. Men were more likely than women to report having positive emotional reactions (e.g., aroused, happy, lucky, etc.) whereas women were more likely than men to report negative emotional reactions (e.g., irritated, angry, turned off, etc.). Therefore, overall, men regarded their coercion experiences more positively than did women. However, this was not consistent for all men. In fact, most men and women in the study (92% and 97%, respectively) reported having had at least one negative emotional reaction to their experience. Additionally, Kernsmith and Kernsmith (2009) found that having more frequent coercion experiences was predictive of negative and ambivalent emotional reactions for both women and men. Another predictor of negative responses was past experience of verbal and physical abuse from a partner; the authors did not report whether the abuse occurred in the same relationship as the coercion experience.

Glenn and Byers (2009) found similar results in their study about the differences in women's cognitive and affective experiences of blame following sexual coercion. The researchers recruited 249 female undergraduate Canadian students from introductory psychology courses at a university and two local community colleges. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 25 years ($M = 19.1$). The women predominately identified as heterosexual (97%) and most (64%) reported being in an exclusive relationship, being married, or living with a partner.

Glenn and Byers (2009) identified a woman as having experienced sexual coercion if she reported a past experience in which she was unwilling, but sexual activity (sexual fondling and attempted and completed intercourse) occurred due to another person's verbal pressure or physical force. Participants completed measures assessing trauma symptoms, depression symptoms, self-esteem, and sexual satisfaction, as well as their internal and external causal

attributions and feelings of guilt about the incident. Participants with more than one coercion experience were instructed to provide data for the experience they perceived as the most serious or the one they found most upsetting.

Glenn and Byers (2009) found that 48% of the women reported at least one experience with sexual coercion since the age of 14. Most of the coercion experiences involved the use of various verbal tactics (69.2%); the rest (30.8%) involved the use or threat of physical force. All of the reported coercers were males; in most cases, the women reported being more than somewhat familiar with the coercer.

Glenn and Byers (2009) also found evidence for various factors related to women's cognitive and affective outcomes following a sexual coercion experience. For example, women who had more past coercion experiences and those who experienced coerced attempted or completed intercourse reported more guilt than the other women in the sample. Contrary to their prediction, they also found a negative correlation between familiarity and guilt in the cases of VSC; women who reported being more familiar with their verbal coercer tended to report lower levels of guilt. In contrast, the relationship between familiarity and guilt for women who experienced physical coercion was not statistically significant. Additionally, there was a positive relationship between women attributing responsibility for the coercion to themselves and their experience of guilt. Another interesting finding is that women's cognitive and affective experiences of blame following sexual coercion was correlated with poorer psychological well-being, regardless of whether they experienced verbal or physical coercion and even after controlling for situational characteristics such as familiarity with the coercer and reported number of past coercion experiences. Glenn and Byers noted that these findings could indicate that women's cognitive and affective reactions to their coercion experiences are more influential

on their well-being than more objective characteristics of the actual coercion (e.g., use of force). Another possible explanation is that having poorer psychological well-being might increase the likelihood of self-blame.

The subjective nature of people's reactions to their coercion experiences was also demonstrated in the findings from our previous study comparing women's and men's experiences with four types of sexual coercion (Mustapha & Muehlenhard, 2015). The participants were 651 undergraduate students (324 women and 327 men) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a Midwestern university. These participants provided information about their experiences with adolescent and adult sexual coercion (AASC). AASC was defined as an unwanted or nonconsensual sexual experience that occurred since the participant turned 14 in one of four ways: (a) someone performed a sexual act on the participant without his or her consent (*simple nonconsent*), (b) someone verbally coerced the participant until he or she gave in (*VSC*), (c) someone did something sexual to the participant while he or she was passed out, asleep, or too drunk or high to consent or resist (*incapacitation*), and (d) someone used or threatened to use physical force against the participant (*physical force*).

In addition to data on whether they had experienced each of the four types of coercion, participants also provided data regarding their cognitive and affective reactions to their experiences. They were asked to indicate the extent to which they experienced certain emotions or certain thoughts within approximately a week of the coercion experience. Examples of emotions included self-directed negative emotions (e.g., disgusted with myself), other-directed negative emotions (e.g., upset with the other person), feelings of satisfaction (e.g., happy), and depressive emotions (e.g., suicidal or numb/empty). Examples of thoughts included thoughts of

self-blame (“I cannot believe I let it happen”), negative thoughts about the other person (“He/she is a jerk”), and confusion (“I don’t understand why this happened to me”).

We found that 30.2% of the women and 8.6% of the men in the sample reported having experienced VSC. Sexual coercion involving physical coercion was least common (reported by 5.2% of the women and 1.5% of the men). In analyses of participants’ reactions, we combined sexual coercion involving physical force and sexual coercion involving incapacitation, given that both are illegal and can be considered to be rape or sexual assault (depending on the sexual act involved). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed a significant effect for participant gender and a significant effect for type of coercion, but no Gender \times Type of coercion interaction.

In general, women reported reacting more negatively than did men. Nevertheless, there was substantial variability among men’s reactions and among women’s reactions; some men responded more negatively than did some women.

In general, participants reported less negative reactions to simple nonconsent than to other forms of sexual coercion. Interestingly, although sexual coercion involving physical force or incapacitation is generally considered more severe than VSC, there were few significant differences between the two. For example, there were no significant differences between incapacitation/physical force and VSC in other-directed negative affect, self-directed negative affect, depressive affect, or fear and anxiety. There were a few significant differences: Participants who experienced VSC were significantly more likely than other coerced participants to report feeling positively toward the coercive person (e.g., “I still like him/her”) and to minimize how negative the experience was for them (e.g., “It did not matter/It was not a big deal”).

Our qualitative data were consistent with the quantitative data for both female and male participants who experienced VSC. Some wrote that compromises are part of having relationships. For example, a woman whose boyfriend “just asked me persistently to have sex until i gave in” wrote, “I dont [sic] think it had that much effect on me because in my mind, that is what you do in a relationship” (W, #98). A man wrote that he and his girlfriend were:

in bed watching TV. I didn't feel well that night. She starts to engage in sexual activity by touching me. I expressed that I didn't want to because I don't feel good. She kept trying to touch and kiss me. Told me she's really horny and needed my help. I said no a couple times, but then gave into the pressure. ... I felt fine. Maybe a little glad because I enjoyed it and it made her happy. [*Thoughts after?*] I thought that wasn't so bad. [*Effect?*] Like I said, it's not a big deal. You got to make compromises in a relationship. This is one of those times. (P#131, M, 31)

In contrast, others made statements expressing feeling coerced by their experience. For example, a woman wrote that she and her boyfriend:

were having foreplay and then I said I didn't want to have sex right then because I was not feeling up to it and he persisted repeatedly saying "I know you want to" over and over and made me feel guilty telling me I was "teasing" until I gave in. ... I told him that I did not want to. He did not waver. [*Emotions afterward:*] I felt...not violated but something close to that. Guilty for not sticking up for myself. And embarrassment. [*Thoughts after:*] “this isn't a big deal” “you shouldn't be crying” “don't let him see you cry, it will upset him” [*Effect:*] I think it has taught me to stand up for myself more often. (P#258, F, 18)

Muehlenhard and colleagues (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007) proposed a multidimensional model that can be used to conceptualize the wantedness of sexual activity. Peterson and Muehlenhard noted that in the dominant model, sex is conceptualized as either wanted or unwanted, and wantedness is conflated with willingness; that is, sex is conceptualized as either wanted and done willingly or as unwanted and done unwillingly. They proposed an alternate model that included the following:

- (a) multiple gradations of wanting rather than a dichotomy; (b) multiple dimensions, acknowledging that sex can be wanted in some ways and unwanted in other ways; (c) an act–consequences distinction, acknowledging that wanting or not wanting a sexual act differs from wanting or not wanting its consequences; and (d) a wanting–consenting distinction, acknowledging that wanting or not wanting sex differs from consenting or not consenting to sex. (p. 74)

Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007) explored women's reactions to consensual and nonconsensual sex and found support for this model. For example, they found that in a sample of 86 women who described their most recent experience with consensual sexual intercourse, 3.5% rated the sexual act itself as unwanted, 50.0% rated the possible consequences of the act as unwanted, and 5.8% described the experiences as unwanted overall (p. 79). Specific reasons for not wanting their consensual sexual experience as unwanted included not being in the mood, anticipating possible negative consequences (e.g., a sexually transmitted disease), lack of confidence, disliking the other person or finding him unattractive, and negative social consequences (e.g., it would have been cheating). It is possible that individuals' varied

reactions to conceding to unwanted sexual activity could be influenced by their reasons for not wanting the experience.

As these studies demonstrate, many factors can account for the variation in reactions among individuals who experience VSC. However, there is limited research on VSC specifically, outside of the context of other forms of sexual coercion. Studying VSC will allow us to assess what factors are associated with individuals' positive or negative reactions to situations in which they engage in sexual activity that was, at least initially, unwanted.

Correlates of VSC in Relationships

Sexual coercion, including VSC, can occur within both informal dyads and more established, intimate relationships. However, Testa and Livingston (1999) found that 93% of sexually coercive acts reported by women were with men known to them; boyfriends and dating partners were most commonly identified. They also found that 68% of coerced penetration by a current or previous partner was achieved using verbally coercive tactics. Other subsequent studies (e.g., Basile, 2002; Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & McGrath, 2007) have found similar results regarding the more frequent use of VSC, over other sexual coercion methods, in relationships. Therefore, verbal sexual coercion is a particularly prevalent type of sexual coercion within romantic or sexual relationships. Researchers have suggested that intimate partners are more likely to use verbal coercion than other forms of coercion because they can obtain sexual access without resorting to physical force or substances (Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004; Basile, 2002). In other words, the verbal tactics involved with VSC (e.g., attempting to “guilt “the person into consenting) may be more effective within the context of an established intimate relationship than with strangers or acquaintances.

Sexual precedence. The high prevalence rates of verbal sexual coercion may be related to the fact that verbal coercion is often considered acceptable, especially in couples with a history of consensual sex. Once this sexual precedence has been established, one or both partners may perceive an obligation to continue to engage in further sexual relations, even if further sexual contact is no longer desired (Shotland & Goodstein, 1992, as cited in Katz & Myhr, 2008). For some, sexual consent at one point in time seems to imply future consent. One study on attributions about rape found that some participants still made assumptions about future sexual consent even after a sexual relationship has been legally dissolved through divorce (Ewoldt, Monson, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000). Therefore, sexual precedence appears to create a social expectation of continued sexual availability and obligation.

Such expectations may explain why the specific persuasion tactics used by verbally coercive men differ depending on sexual precedence. Livingston et al. (2004) examined women's experiences of VSC. Their sample was drawn from a larger sample of 1,014 women in a longitudinal study of sexual behavior and alcohol use. The women, who were between the ages of 18 and 30 ($M = 23.76$), were recruited from households in the Buffalo, NY area. Livingston et al. (2004) assessed for women's experiences of rape, attempted rape, sexual coercion, or unwanted sexual contact with a modified version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1985) that was self-administered on a computer. Women who responded in the affirmative to one of two questions on the SES ("Have you ever given in to sexual intercourse when you did not want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?" and "Have you had sexual intercourse when you did not want to because a man used his position of authority [e.g., boss, teacher, camp counselor, supervisor] to make you?") were considered to have experienced VSC.

Women who experienced VSC reported verbal persuasion and persistence as the most common tactics used by their coercers. Livingston et al. (2004) classified verbal persuasion into three categories: “negative, positive, and neutral/nagging” (p. 290). Some examples of negative persuasion tactics are threats by a partner to end the relationship or to seek sexual activity outside of it, verbal aggression, and withdrawing. These tactics were intended to “manipulate the woman into having sex through eliciting feelings of guilt, obligation, or fear of losing the relationship” (p. 290). Positive persuasion to obtain sex included flattery or promises to move the relationship forward. Other women described situations with neither positive nor negative persuasion, but instead described a man as continuously nagging or pleading. Though Livingston et al. (2004) sought to focus on VSC, about half of the women coerced with verbal tactics also reported experiencing physical persuasion tactics that ranged from kissing and sexual touching to physical aggression such as being held down.

Livingston et al. (2004) examined the role of sexual precedence by comparing women who reported a history of consensual sex with their coercer (“SP women”) with women who reported no sexual history (“NP women”) with their coercer (p. 292). The researchers noted differences between SP women and NP women as well as between SP coercers and NP coercers. Both SP women and SP coercers were older than their counterparts at the time of the incident. Men who had verbally coerced women with whom they had a consensual sexual history were almost always (97.3%) current or ex-partners of the women. Current or ex-partners accounted for 37.5% of the men who coerced women with whom they did not have a sexual history. In contrast, a larger majority (62.5%) of the men with no sexual precedence were friends or acquaintances. The verbal tactics used also varied according to sexual precedence. When there was no sexual precedence with a woman, verbally coercive men used more positive verbal

tactics to obtain sex, such as “sweet-talking” (p. 291), such as telling her she was beautiful or suggesting that it would strengthen their relationship. However, after sexual precedence had been established, coercive men tended to use negative verbal tactics to obtain sex, such as invoking feelings of obligation and guilt.

Negative relationship context. Several studies have provided evidence suggesting that verbal sexual coercion is indicative of more pervasive relationship problems. For example, in the Livingston et al. (2004) study, the negative persuasion used by sexual partners to coerce women into sex included threatening the relationship, putting the woman down, swearing, and expressing dissatisfaction with their sexual or overall relationship. The researchers speculated that perhaps not only during episodes of sexual coercion, but also during disagreements in general, verbally coercive men might engage in dominant and verbally aggressive behaviors, and verbally coerced women may not effectively resist unwanted partner demands (Livingston et al., 2004).

Katz and Myhr (2008) conducted a study with 193 undergraduate women in current heterosexual relationships to address that question. The participants were women between the ages of 18 and 22 ($M = 19.24$) who volunteered for the study through the psychology department’s research pool. Data from these women were included in the study because, based on a modified version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss & Oros, 1982), they reported not having had an experience that would be classified as rape by a partner, either through force or intoxication. An additional participant requirement was that the women had to report a history of consensual sexual intercourse with their partner. Katz and Myhr were interested in expanding the work of Livingston et al. (2004). They focused on how the relational

context, perceived conflict behaviors, and relationship quality were associated with partner verbal coercion in dating relationships with sexual precedence.

The researchers operationalized partner verbal coercion with the two VSC questions from the SES identified earlier. Participants were asked to indicate how often their dating partner used continual arguments and pressure or authority to obtain sexual intercourse the participant did not want. Perceived conflict behaviors was operationalized as perceptions of partner psychological abuse and destructive verbal conflict patterns. Psychological abuse includes the use of verbal behaviors to cause emotional harm, including threats of harm, insults, and guilt induction (Hammock & O’Hearn, 2002, as cited in Katz & Myhr, 2008). Katz and Myhr (2008) hypothesized that women who reported experiencing partner verbal coercion would report sustaining more frequent partner psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, monitoring, and intimidation, than would women who do not report partner coercion.

As previously stated, VSC in relationships may be related to a range of destructive verbal conflict patterns. One example of such a pattern is demand–withdraw patterns, which are patterns of polarization in which one person makes a request (demand) and the other retreats (withdraws), followed by increased requests by the first partner and further withdrawal by the second (Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1999). An act of VSC can be thought of as a specific instance of partner demand–self-withdraw behavior; one partner insists on (demands) sex, but the other withdraws (either actively or passively). In a study, by Katz, Carino, and Hilton (2002), men’s use of sexual coercion (including both verbal pressure and physical force) against female dating partners were associated with their use of “I demand–partner withdraws” argument patterns. Katz and Myhr (2008) therefore hypothesized that verbally coerced women would report more frequent use of “partner demands–I withdraw” patterns than noncoerced women.

Also, verbally coerced women were hypothesized to report more frequent withdrawal and compliance during disagreements with partners than noncoerced women.

Regarding the other aspect of relational context, Katz and Myhr (2008) operationalized relationship quality as relationship satisfaction and sexual functioning. Responding to an absence of research regarding the effects of VSC from a sexual partner on general feelings about the relationship with that person, the researchers examined the association between experiencing VSC and women's report of relationship satisfaction. They expected a negative association between partner VSC and general relationship satisfaction. In relation to that, they also believed that VSC would decrease the quality of sexual relationship with a coercive partner and sexual desire for that person. They thought that having been pressured into unwanted sex, pleasure associated with sex and interest in future sexual encounters may be reduced.

The researchers found support for their hypotheses. Partner VSC was associated with coerced women's perceptions of more destructive verbal conflict patterns, poorer relationship satisfaction, and compromised sexual functioning. The use of verbal tactics by a dating partner was associated with perceptions of more frequent partner psychological abuse (Katz & Myhr, 2008). Verbally coerced women reported experiencing significantly more frequent general partner psychological aggression and more frequent partner monitoring and emotional abuse than noncoerced women. These results indicate that VSC does not occur independently of other forms of nonphysical aggression. Alternatively, VSC may be seen as one specific example of more general maladaptive conflict patterns characterized by male dominance, power, and control (Katz & Myhr, 2008).

Verbally coerced women also reported several maladaptive conflict patterns during disagreements with their partners. The results indicated that these women perceived use of less

positive and more negative conflict behaviors on their part, such as more frequent perceived withdrawal and negative engagement during conflict situations. Katz and Myhr's (2008) findings suggest that verbally coerced women are less likely than noncoerced women to take, or at least to perceive themselves as taking, an active, constructive role in conflict resolution generally. As expected, women in verbally coercive relationships also reported significantly less general relationship satisfaction, as well as less sexual satisfaction and desire, than other women. Overall, the results supported their suggestion that verbal sexual coercion by a dating partner may reflect more pervasive relational problems.

One limitation to the study by Katz and Myhr (2008) is that the researchers' study was limited to women, who were reporting on their experiences as targets of VSC. Salwen and O'Leary (2013) were also interested in exploring the association between negative relational contexts and sexual coercion in intimate heterosexual relationships. However, they included both the female and male partners. Participants were 453 heterosexual, married or cohabitating couples from New York. These couples were recruited through random digit dialing as part of a larger study on conflict in families.

Salwen and O'Leary (2013) examined a mediational model of men's perpetration of sexual coercion of their female partners. The researchers expected that maladaptive relational style would mediate the relationship between the occurrence of sexual coercion and individual adjustment problems. The researchers used the term sexual coercion to refer to VSC, differentiating it from physically forceful acts such as rape, which they referred to as sexual aggression. They described sexual coercion as a situation in which a person continually insists or uses verbal pressure and/or promises of positive outcomes (e.g., rewards) in order to obtain sexual activity. Adjustment problems were conceptualized as perceived stress, low reports of

social support, and dissatisfaction with the relationship. Maladaptive relational styles included issues such as jealousy, dominance, and psychological aggression. They expected that both maladaptive relational style and adjustment problems would be positively associated with sexual coercion. They also expected that the relationship between adjustment problems and sexual coercion would no longer be significant when maladaptive relational style was included as a mediator in the model.

Salwen and O’Leary (2013) found that 28% of the men in their sample reported having perpetrated VSC. They also found, as hypothesized, that maladaptive relational style was positively associated with both adjustment problems and sexual coercion. The association between sexual coercion and individual adjustment problems was also significant and positively correlated. One limitation to note is that this study was a part of a larger examination of conflict in families. In order to participate, the couples had to have been living together for a year or longer. Additionally, they had to be parenting a biological child (between the ages of 3 and 7) of at least one of the partners. These participation requirements are important to consider before generalizing the results of this study to more diverse groups. Another important limitation is that this study did not examine men’s experiences as the targets of VSC. Despite these limitations, this study does provide information regarding some negative relational factors that may influence women’s reactions to VSC.

Relationship investment. Subjective investment into a relationship is another factor that has been examined in regards to its effects on reactions to sexual coercion. Rusbult (1980)’s investment model predicts commitment to and satisfaction with an established romantic relationship. According to this model, people who are satisfied with, have invested greatly (in terms of time and effort) into their relationship, and have less appealing options are more likely

to feel committed to and work toward maintaining their relationship. This model has been used to examine people's reactions to various relationship problems. For example, one study found that battered women who were more greatly invested in their relationship (e.g., they were married) and had poorer alternatives were more likely to report higher feelings of commitment than other battered women (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). These feelings of commitment were strongly associated with those women returning to a battering partner immediately after leaving a women's shelter.

Katz, Kuffel, and Brown (2006) investigated the relationship between women's experience of VSC from a male partner and their relationship outcomes, by applying Rusbult's (1980) investment model of romantic relationship commitment. Participants in this study were 180 heterosexual female undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a university in the Pacific Northwest. The mean age of participants was 19 years. In order to participate, women had to be in an ongoing dating relationship. The mean length of their relationships was 9.91 months.

Katz et al.'s (2006) definition of VSC is a situation in which one partner obtains sex (vaginal, oral, or anal) from the disinterested participant through the use of verbal tactics that may include consistent pleading, begging, or verbal insults and taunts. Based on past research on sexual coercion outcomes, they expected that female participants who experienced coercion from a partner would report feeling less satisfied with their relationships than women who were not coerced. They expected that women who concede to VSC might conceptualize their experience as a personal sacrifice in order to placate their partner. Therefore, these women were expected to report having made greater investments into their relationship than would women who were not coerced. So, women who experienced VSC were expected to report feeling less satisfied with,

yet more invested in their relationship than women without coercive partners. Finally, applying the investment model, Katz et al. (2006) expected that women who reported feeling more satisfied, more invested and who had poorer alternatives, would also report greater subjective commitment. Commitment was then hypothesized to be predictive of relationship maintenance.

Katz et al. (2006) found that 29% of the women in their sample reported at least one VSC experience. As they expected, women in the VSC group endorsed greater subjective investment in their relationship than noncoerced women. However, there were no significant differences in relationship satisfaction between coerced and noncoerced women. Katz et al. (2006) proposed that some women who experience VSC may attempt to cope with the experience by conceptualizing it as something done for the greater good of the relationship. These women would be less likely to end the relationship with the coercive partner because their investment would be lost. Therefore, in order to reduce the dissonance they would otherwise experience by maintaining a relationship with someone who is coercive, Katz et al. (2006) suggested that some women who experience VSC may attribute the behavior to factors external to the partner (e.g., “That’s just what happens in relationships”).

Faulkner, Kolts, and Hicks (2008) conducted a similar study that also draws from Rusbault’s (1980) investment model. They examined the influence of traditional sex role ideology and relationship context on female participants’ response to a sexual coercion situation. Participants were 114 female undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses in the northwest.

The authors’ definition of sexual coercion included both verbal and physical tactics. Rather than using data from retrospective reports, as is typical in this research area, the researchers used an audio-vignette procedure to examine participants’ behavioral responses to a

sexual coercion situation. Participants were instructed to listen to a 5 ½ minute long, computer-administered audio-vignette of a date in which a man was attempting to coerce a woman into engaging in sexual intercourse in the course of other sexual activity (i.e., kissing). The vignette progressed from the man using verbal tactics (“If you don’t let me do this I don’t know what I’ll do. I might have to stop seeing you.”, p. 143) to physical tactics and eventually results in a completed rape (though none of the participants heard the rape segment during the actual study). Participants indicated that they would leave the date by pressing a key on the computer to stop the vignette. Participants’ response latency was used as the dependent measure. Faulkner et al. (2008) manipulated relationship context by randomly assigning participants to hear one of three descriptions of the man in the vignette during the introduction: a first date, a graduate teaching assistant, or a boyfriend of 6 months.

Though the researchers did not find evidence supporting their hypothesis that sex role traditionality would be associated with greater response latency, they did find evidence for the effects of relationship context. Participants who were told that the scenario involved a man with whom the woman had been dating for 6 months terminated the audio-vignette around one minute later than those in the other two conditions. When the male was described as a first date or graduate teaching assistant, participants on average terminated the encounter (after two refusals from the woman) when the male began using “slight verbal pressure” (Faulkner et al., 2008, p. 147) to pressure the woman into behavior with which she uncomfortable. In contrast, in the boyfriend condition, participants on average terminated the encounter after three refusals, verbal upset from the woman, and verbal aggression from the man. Although caution should be taken in interpreting these results (certainly “terminating” a sexual coercion encounter by pressing a key on a computer would be easier than actually doing so during a real encounter), this study

provides important insight into factors that might influence response to sexual coercion. The researchers applied Rusbult's (1980) investment model as one possible explanation. That is, woman may be more accepting of coercive behaviors in long-standing relationships into which they feel they have invested more. Other potential relationship factors they explored are assumptions about the amount of trust you would have for someone you have dated for 6 months, and a woman feeling worried about damaging the relationship if she terminates the encounter.

Status of coercive relationship: Past or current. Another factor that may influence how people who experience VSC conceptualize their experiences is whether the coercion occurred in a previous relationship, or a current one. Some studies on sexual coercion in the context of heterosexual relationships, with male and female partners regarded both as potential initiators and potential targets of coercion, shed some light on this topic. Brousseau, Bergeron, Hébert, and McDuff (2011) conducted one such study on reciprocal coercion within past and current heterosexual relationships. Their participants were undergraduate and graduate students at a Canadian university. Students in current relationships were asked to invite their partner to also participate in the study. Their final sample was 222 heterosexual couples.

Sexual coercion in this study was defined as using either verbal or physical pressure to make someone participate in sexual activity for which they had previously expressed unwillingness. I will focus exclusively on the data regarding verbal pressure. They found that 49.5% and 22.8% of female and male participants, respectively, reported having experienced VSC from a partner in the past. Conversely, 12.8% and 31.2% of female and male participants, respectively, reported having used verbal coercion in a past relationship. It is interesting to compare these reported rates for VSC within past relationships to the reported rates in current

relationships. Regarding their current relationship, 23.9% and 11.3% of female and male participants, respectively, reported being verbally coerced into sexual activity. These percentages are about half the reported rates of VSC in past relationships.

Though it is possible that participants who have experienced sexual coercion in a past relationship may actively avoid future partners who may be coercive, it is also possible, as the researchers suggested, that participants' conceptualization of their experiences vary based on relationship status (past or current) as a function of avoiding cognitive dissonance. That is, labeling a current partner as sexually coercive would likely create more dissonance for an individual than doing the same with a past partner. So, they "may be more capable and/or willing to label coercive behaviors as such only once the relationship is over" (Brousseau et al., 2011, p. 370). This presents a particular challenge for studying VSC in the context of ongoing romantic relationships.

Limitations of Existing Literature

One problem with the research on VSC in romantic relationships is that there simply is not much of it. VSC is very often studied in the context of physical forms of sexual coercion, such as those that would meet legal definitions for rape. Many researchers who study risk factors for VSC or characteristics of those who coerce or are coerced choose to combine VSC with other types of sexual coercion when conducting analyses (e.g., Aberle & Littlefield, 2001; Bernat, Calhoun, & Adams, 1999). This is based on the assumption that all forms of sexual coercion share the same etiology, and thus VSC is simply on a lower rung of the sexual misconduct ladder than rape. This would imply that VSC is the first step and that those who coerce with verbal tactics may subsequently also coerce with physical tactics (DeGue & DiLillo, 2005).

This assumption is problematic for a number of reasons. One, it results in limited information specifically about VSC. Additionally, VSC may be etiologically different from sexual aggression in the form of rape as suggested by DeGue and DiLillo (2005). The researchers cited differences found across multiple studies in etiological factors (e.g., belief systems, behavioral tendencies, personality factors, and child abuse histories) between men who use VSC and those who coerce with physical methods. For example, they argued that motivational factors for physical sexual coercion might be related to overall hostility and aggressive tendencies, while motivation for VSC may be more sexual based. They describe the goal of VSC as obtaining sexual contact that at least appears consensual. Results from some of the previously reviewed studies support this differentiation between VSC and physical sexual coercion. For example, Katz et al. (2006) found no correlation between experiencing VSC and physical violence in ongoing romantic relationships. Therefore, if there are indeed important conceptual differences between VSC and other forms of sexual coercion, then more research focused solely on VSC, outside the context of other coercion, is much needed.

Furthermore, research on VSC in relationships suffers from many of the same conceptual issues as research on sexual coercion in general (e.g., the lack of a uniform operational definition). In addition, one conceptual issue that is specific to VSC is deciding when an exchange becomes coercive (O'Sullivan, 2005). Can the first sexual act be considered coercive even if the person initiating the act may not realize that it is unwanted? Or is the encounter considered coercive *after* an initiator performs a sexual act their partner has previously expressed (either verbally or nonverbally) a lack of desire for? This is a decision future researchers must make in defining VSC and it should be made explicit in publications. Again, this complication is unique to VSC. With regards to sexual coercion that occurs through the use of tactics such as

physical force or intoxication, most people would likely agree that the first sexual act in those situations could be considered coercive.

There are also methodological issues to consider. The majority of research on sexual coercion, including VSC, focuses solely on women's experiences as targets of coercion (by men) and men's experiences as initiators of coercion (of women) (O'Sullivan, 2005). Although the national prevalence rates of women's and men's experiences with coercion certainly do illustrate that women experience all forms of sexual coercion to a greater extent than do men, some men are coerced by women. Researching the experiences of men as targets of coercion would be beneficial for expanding our understanding of factors that influence conceptualization and reaction to VSC.

Another methodological issue is the need for more standardized measures. The most commonly used is the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss & Gidycz, 1985), a measure through which participants can endorse having had experiences of unwanted sex that occurred through use of various coercive tactics, including verbal pressure. DeGue and DiLillo (2005) and O'Sullivan (2005) discussed some concerns with the heavy reliance on the SES. For example, researchers (Ross & Allgeier, 1996, as cited in O'Sullivan, 2005) have found with in-depth follow-up interviews, that participants' interpretations of SES items vary. Thus, they may endorse having had an experience that does not actually coincide with the researchers' definition of that form of coercion. O'Sullivan (2005) proposed the development of new measures of sexual coercion based on qualitative research. Existing and new qualitative research would be helpful in developing additional, and more comprehensive, measures of sexual coercion, and VSC specifically.

Altogether, findings from the studies reviewed in this paper highlight the complexity of factors that influence how people conceptualize and react to their VSC experiences. They also demonstrate the need for future studies addressing both the lack of research exclusively on VSC and the conceptual and methodological issues of the current literature.

The Present Study

This present study addressed some of these issues by examining women's and men's experiences of conceding to unwanted sexual activity (CUSA). Due to the limited amount of research in this area, this study was exploratory in nature. We used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the prevalence of these experiences for women and men and factors associated with more positive or negative reactions to these experiences. Participants were asked about two experiences: one about which they felt generally positive, *a positive experience*, and one about which they felt generally negative, *a negative experience*. Using quantitative and qualitative data, we compared relationship and situational characteristics that differed between their positive and negative experiences.

Method

Participants

Participants were female and male General Psychology students recruited through the Psychology Department's SONA website. Our *complete sample*—that is, those who completed the whole survey—consisted of 274 participants (150 female, 122 male, 2 gender variant). There were 15 participants (9 female, 6 male) whose submissions were excluded because they did not complete the survey in its entirety or they provided duplicate submissions. Additionally, data from one woman who emphasized that the sexual activity was never unwanted at any point and data from 10 women who described nonconsensual sexual experiences (e.g., rape with physical

force and/or intoxication) were excluded. Our *final sample*—that is, those who reported an experience of CUSA—consisted of 88 women, 53 men, and 2 gender variant individuals.

The final sample consisted of mostly first-year students (68%). In the complete sample, the mean age was 19.2 years (range = 17–29 years); among women, $M = 18.9$, range = 17–29; among men, $M = 19.3$, range = 18–25; among gender variant participants, $M = 18.5$; range = 18–19. Most participants were European American/White (77%), with smaller numbers of Hispanic American/Latino/Latina (10%), African American/Black (3%), Asian American/Asian (3%), or biracial/multiracial (6%) participants and no Native American/American Indian participants. The large majority of our participants identified as heterosexual (91%). Most participants were currently not dating or otherwise involved with anyone (45%); a smaller number reported being involved exclusively with one person (23%).

Measures

The online questionnaire included the following: (a) a demographics section, (b) a sexual experiences prompt, (c) qualitative questions, and (d) quantitative questions. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

Demographics section. Participants responded to questions regarding their gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and current relationship status.

Sexual experiences prompt. Participants then responded to two open-ended questions about agreeing to engage in sexual activity that was, at least initially, unwanted: “For what reasons, if any, might someone feel good about agreeing to engage in sexual activity that they initially did not want?” and “For what reasons, if any, might someone **not** feel good about agreeing to engage in sexual activity that they initially did not want?”

The purpose was to prompt participants to start thinking about possible reasons for why someone might agree to engage in unwanted sexual activity. This may have also prompted them to start thinking about their own experiences. The goal was to decrease the number of “false negatives” in which participants report that they have never had these experiences because nothing immediately comes to mind.

Open-ended questions about their own experience. Participants then answered questions about their own experiences with engaging in sexual activity they did not desire after being talked into it by another person. Participants were asked,

Have you ever been in a situation in which you initially did not want to engage in a sexual activity, but someone talked you into it and you felt generally positive after the experience?

They were also asked the same question again, but in regards to a negative experience. The order of the questions regarding positive and negative experiences were counterbalanced.

Participants who responded in the affirmative were asked to answer several open-ended questions regarding their experiences of CUSA. Examples include, “What was your relationship with the other person at the time?” and “Describe the situation, be sure to include • What led up to the situation, • The sexual activity the other person wanted, • Why you initially did not want the activity.” Other questions addressed their reason(s) for not wanting to engage in the sexual activity, what the other person said to talk them into the activity, and why they felt generally positive/negative about the experience.

Closed-ended questions. Participants were also asked to respond to close-ended questions inquiring about the sex/gender of the other person, their relationship with the other person at that time, the sexual behavior(s) they were talked into, their reasons for not wanting to

engage in the sexual activity, how the other person talked them into the activity, their reasons for eventually agreeing to engage in the sexual behavior, and whether or not they and the other person had been drinking around the time of the experience. Additionally, participants rated how much each situation felt like compromise and how much it felt like coercion, each on a 7-point scale. They also rated the valence of their reactions (i.e., how positively and how negatively they felt about each experience). Finally, they rated their emotions and thoughts a week after the experience.

Final questions. In the last section, participants who reported both a positive and negative experience were asked to provide their thoughts about what made one situation more positive or negative than the other: “What was different about these two situations that made one more negative or positive than the other?” They were also asked if they had any final comments.

Procedure

After signing up for the study, participants were provided access to an online informed consent form. This form provided information about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants, including the right to discontinue at any time without penalty. It also provided the contact information for the researchers, the HSCL, and information about local counseling resources. This information was also repeated later in the debriefing form. Participants indicated their desire to continue with the study by giving their digital signature (typing in their name and KUID) at the bottom of the page. This information was required so they could receive credit for their participation.

After participants indicated that they gave their informed consent, they were forwarded to the main questionnaire, which did not ask for their name, KUID, or any other identifying information. The main questionnaire was also separate from the informed consent form. These

measures were to ensure that participants could complete the questionnaire anonymously. If participants reported having had a positive experience and/or a negative experience, they were shown the questions about one or both of the experiences. If participants reported neither experience, they were instructed to respond to similar questions about a hypothetical situation. After completing the questionnaire, participants were provided debriefing information with a thorough explanation of the study's purpose and the contact information described earlier. Participants generally completed the study in less than an hour.

Results

The Prevalence of CUSA

The complete sample included 150 women, 122 men, and two participants who identified as gender variant (they self-identified as “non-binary” and “genderfluid”). The percentages of participants who reported having conceded to unwanted sexual activity are presented in Table 1.

More than half of the women, and fewer than half the men, reported a CUSA experience, either positive, negative, or both. Both gender variant individuals reported a CUSA experience; because of the small number, their data were excluded from analyses that involved gender comparisons. Similar percentages of women and men reported positive CUSA experiences, $\chi^2 (N = 272) = 1.63, p = .202$. Significantly more women than men reported negative CUSA experiences, $\chi^2 (N = 272) = 10.48, p = .001$.

Table 1

Percentages of Women, Men, and Gender-Variant Participants Who Reported Conceding to Unwanted Sexual Activity (CUSA)

	Positive experience % (<i>n</i>)	Negative experience % (<i>n</i>)	Both experiences % (<i>n</i>)	Either experience % (<i>n</i>)
Women	42% (63)	33% (49)	16% (24)	59% (88)
Men	34% (43)	16% (19)	7% (8)	44% (53)
Gender variant	0% (0)	100% (2)	0% (0)	100% (2)

Note. Table entries are the percentages (and numbers) of participants in the initial sample who reported a positive or negative experience of conceding to unwanted sexual activity. $N = 274$; 150 women, 122 men, and 2 gender variant individuals. Only women and men were included in statistical analyses.

McNemar's test was used to compare the percentage of women who reported a positive experience with the percentage of women who reported a negative experience. The same comparison was also done for men. There was not a significant difference in the percentages of women who reported positive (42%) and negative (33%) experiences ($p = .08$). Men, however, were significantly more likely to report positive (34%) than negative (16%) experiences ($p < .001$).

Comparisons of Participants' Positive and Negative Experiences: Overview

One purpose of this study was to identify characteristics that differentiated participants'

positive and negative experiences. Descriptive data on characteristics of participants' positive and negative experiences are presented in Appendix B. Statistically comparing the positive and negative situations was challenging for several reasons. One reason was that some participants reported having experienced both a positive and a negative situation, whereas others reported only one situation—either a positive or a negative situation. For participants who had experienced both a positive and a negative situation, we could have used matched-pairs statistical techniques such as repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs) for quantitative variables and McNemar's tests for matched-pairs categorical variables (Agresti, 1996). For participants who had experienced only a positive situation or only a negative situation, we could have used statistical techniques such as independent-samples ANOVAs for quantitative variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables. Because our sample included some participants in each situation, we had to decide how to handle the situation.

We decided to use the following approach for our statistical comparisons: Most of our participants reported having experienced only one of the two situations. So, for the positive-versus-negative statistical comparisons, we randomly assigned the participants who had been in both situations to either the positive or negative condition. That is, for participants who reported having both positive and negative situations, we used only their positive-situation data or only their negative-situation data, randomly determined with the constraint of equal distributions.

Among the women, 24 reported both situations; we used only the positive-situation data for 12 and only the negative-situation for the other 12. Among the men, 8 reported both situations; we used only the positive-situation data for 4 and only the negative-situation for the other 4. As a result, for the positive–negative comparisons, there were 51 women and 39 men in the positive condition and 37 women and 15 men in the negative condition (see Table 2).

Table 2

Numbers of Participants Reporting Positive and Negative Experiences and Numbers of Participants Used in the Positive Situation–Negative Situation Comparisons

	Numbers of participants who reported either or both of the situations			Numbers of participants used in the positive–negative comparisons	
	Positive experience only	Negative experience only	Both experiences	Positive- experience condition	Negative- experience condition
Women	39	25	24	51	37
Men	35	11	8	39	15

Note. This table reflects the 88 women and the 54 men who reported one or both experiences. To conduct between-subjects statistical analyses, the 24 women and 8 men who reported both experiences were randomly assigned to either the positive or negative condition, meaning that we used data from only their positive or negative situations in the positive–negative statistical comparisons.

Another reason that statistical comparisons of the positive and negative situations were challenging was the small *ns* in some of the cells. Of the 122 men in the complete sample, there were 49 in the positive condition and only 15 were in the negative condition. For any comparisons involving characteristics of the men’s negative experiences, tables were especially sparse, often involving low expected cell counts. As a result, we used a series of exact tests: Fisher’s exact test for 2×2 tables, and exact $r \times c$ contingency table tests for larger contingency tables (available at http://www.physics.csbsju.edu/stats/exact_NROW_NCOLUMN_form.html).

The tables below show the data used in the statistical comparisons of the positive and

negative situations. These numbers differ somewhat from the numbers of all the experiences that participants reported (see Table 1) because for those who reported both situations, data from only one situation were used.

The sex of the other person. As would be expected in a mostly heterosexual sample (91%), most of the participants' experiences were with someone of the other sex. There were no significant differences between the positive and negative situations in the proportion of other-sex and same-sex partners (see Table 3).

Table 3

The Sex of the Other Person

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Other-sex partner	94% (48)	100% (37)	97% (37)	93% (14)
Same-sex partner	6% (3)	0% (0)	3% (1)	7% (1)
	100% (51)	100% (37)	100% (38)	100% (15)
	$p = .261$		$p = .490$	

The relationship with the other person. Participants were also asked to indicate their relationship with the other person, choosing one response from a list of possible responses.

During data analysis, we grouped these responses into categories: someone they had *just met*; someone with whom they had a *nonsexual relationship* (e.g., an acquaintance or platonic friend); someone with whom they had a *sex-based relationship* (e.g., a hookup,

friends with benefits); someone with whom they had a *casual relationship* (i.e., a relationship that was romantic or sexual—or potentially romantic or sexual—but that was not yet a committed relationship, such as someone they had been “talking” with or casually dating); or someone with whom they were in a *committed relationship* (e.g., living together as partners or married).

Information about participants’ relationships with the other person are presented in Table 4. Participants most frequently reported that the other person was a committed partner. Next most frequently reported were nonsexual relationships (friends or acquaintances) and casual relationships (someone they had been casually dating or “talking” to).

Because women’s reports of their relationship with the other person showed a significant difference between positive and negative situations, we conducted follow-up analyses for each type of acquaintance (see Table 4). Women’s experiences with someone they were casually dating or “talking” to were significantly more likely to be negative (67%) than positive (33%). For men, this association was not significant, but it was in the opposite direction as for women: Of the eight men who reported an experience with someone they were casually dating or “talking” to, seven reported that the experience had been positive, and only one reported that the experience had been negative.

There were also nonsignificant trends in which women’s experiences with someone they had just met were more likely to be negative (83%) than positive (17%) and in which women’s experiences with someone they were in a committed relationship with were more likely to be positive (71%) than negative (29%).

Table 4

Their Relationship With the Other Person

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Just met	2% (1)	14% (5) †	0% (0)	7% (1)
Nonsexual relationship:				
Acquaintances [not sexual prior to that]	24% (12)	24% (9)	29% (11)	53% (8)
Friends [not sexual prior to that]				
Sex-based relationship:				
Hooking up	14% (7)	3% (1)	13% (5)	0% (0)
Friends with benefits				
Casual relationship:				
We had been "talking"	12% (6)	32% (12) *	18% (7)	7% (1)
Casually dating				
Committed relationship:				
In a committed relationship	48% (24)	27% (10) †	39% (15)	27% (4)
Living together as partners				
Total	100% (50)	100% (37)	100% (38)	100% (15)
	$p = .008$		$p = .102$	

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

The sexual behaviors involved. Participants were also asked to indicate the sexual behaviors they were talked into, choosing from a list of possible responses. Participants were able to choose more than one option as applicable. We analyzed the sexual behaviors involved in two ways. First, we classified each participant's experience according to the highest level of sexual behavior reported. We regarded kissing or making out as the lowest level, performing or receiving genital touching as the next highest, performing or receiving oral sex as the next

highest, and sexual penetration (penile-vaginal intercourse or performing or receiving anal sex) as the highest level. Next, we assessed whether or not each participant's experience involved sexual intercourse. We found no significant differences between positive and negative experiences in the sexual behaviors involved for either women or men (see Table 5).

Table 5

The Sexual Behaviors Involved

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Highest level of sexual behavior ^a				
Kissing or making out	12% (6)	11% (4)	8% (3)	7% (1)
Performing or receiving genital touching	6% (3)	3% (1)	0% (0)	7% (1)
Performing or receiving oral sex	16% (8)	32% (12)	14% (5)	27% (4)
Sexual penetration: Penile–vaginal intercourse or anal sex	66% (33)	54% (20)	78% (29)	60% (9)
Total	100% (50)	100% (37)	100% (37)	100% (15)
	$p = .346$		$p = .244$	
Did the experience involve penile–vaginal intercourse				
Yes	63% (32)	49% (18)	72% (28)	60% (9)
No	37% (19)	51% (19)	28% (11)	40% (6)
Total	100% (51)	100% (37)	100% (39)	100% (15)
	$p = .200$		$p = .516$	

^a In the first section of this table, we present the highest level of sexual behaviors that participants reported. For example, someone who reported genital touching and oral sex would be in the oral sex category of this table. We acknowledge that individuals' personal reactions to these sexual behaviors do not necessarily correspond to these levels.

Participants' reasons for not wanting to engage in the sexual activity. Participants were asked about their reasons for not wanting, at least initially, to engage in the sexual experience. Participants selected one or more reasons from a list of options. This long list was condensed into the following categories for data analyses (see Table 6).

Some participants reported that their experience involved a sexual activity that they did not want to do with anyone. Men were significantly more likely to report this reason for their negative experiences (27%) than for their positive experiences (0%), $p = .004$. For the four men who reported that their negative experience was unwanted because they did not want to do the sexual activity with anyone, the activity was PVI. It is interesting that in their qualitative responses, all four of these men also shared that the experience was negative due to reasons that centered on conflicts with their values and morals. For women, this reason did not differentiate between positive (12%) and negative (16%) experiences, $p = .549$. For women who reported that the experience was unwanted because it involved behaviors that were unwanted with anyone, the sexual activity for both the positive and negative experiences were most commonly PVI and performing or receiving oral sex.

Some participants reported that their experience was unwanted because they had wanted to wait until they were married. There was a trend in which men were more likely to report this reason for their negative experiences (20%) than for their positive experiences (3%), $p = .060$.

For women, this reason did not differentiate between positive (12%) and negative (8%) experiences, $p = .728$.

Table 6

Participants' Reasons for Not Wanting to Engage in the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive ($n = 51$)	Negative ($n = 37$)	Positive ($n = 39$)	Negative ($n = 15$)
Undesired act with anyone:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity with anyone.	12% (6)	16% (6)	0% (0)	27% (4) **
Relationship-related reasons:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity with that specific person.				
I did not want to do the sexual activity until the relationship was right (e.g., until we were in an exclusive relationship, until I was more comfortable with the person, etc.)	43% (22)	59% (22)	28% (11)	40% (6)
I did not want my relationship with the other person to become sexual.				
Waiting until marriage:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity until I was married.	12% (6)	8% (3)	3% (1)	20% (3) †
Situational factors:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity in that specific context/situation.	65% (33)	59% (22)	64% (25)	73% (11)
I wasn't in the mood.				
Intoxication:				
I felt too intoxicated.	4% (2)	8% (3)	5% (2)	20% (3)
The other person seemed too intoxicated.				

Note. Columns sum to more than 100% because participants could select more than one response.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

How the other person tried to talk participants into the sexual activity. Participants were asked what the other person said to try to get them to agree to the sexual activity. They were able to select one or more verbal strategies from a list of options. For analyses these options were organized into the categories in Table 7.

Many participants reported that the other person had used positive approaches, such as telling them that it would be good for the relationship or that it would be enjoyable; participants reported that these approaches had been used about as often in their positive experiences as in their negative experiences (see Table 7). Only negative approaches distinguished between positive and negative experiences. Women reported that other person had tried to induce negative emotions (e.g., trying to make them feel guilty or inadequate; accusing them of being a tease) significantly more often in their negative experiences than in their positive experiences, $p = .001$.

Both women and men reported that other person had badgered them (e.g., asking repeatedly; saying that they really, really wanted it) significantly more often in their negative experiences than in their positive experiences, $p = .009$ for women and $.002$ for men.

Table 7

How the Other Person Tried to Talk Participants Into the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 51)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 37)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 39)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 15)
Trying to induce negative emotions:				
Trying to make you feel guilty or inadequate (e.g., saying you were being a bad girlfriend/boyfriend)	12% (6)	43% (16) **	8% (3)	20% (3)
The other person accused me of leading them on/being a tease.				
Badgering/pleading:				
Asking repeatedly	43% (22)	73% (27) **	56% (22)	100% (15) **
Saying that they really, really wanted it				
Threatening to break up with you or go outside the relationship for sexual activity	0% (0)	5% (2)	3% (1)	0% (0)
Saying it would be good for the relationship:				
Saying that it would make the relationship stronger				
Discussing compromise (e.g., saying that compromise is part of any relationship, reminding you of times in the past that they have done something for you)	41% (21)	49% (18)	28% (11)	27% (4)
Saying that they would appreciate it				
Saying that it would be fun:				
Reassuring you that the activity would be pleasurable for you	55% (28)	54% (20)	44% (17)	67% (10)
Bargaining:				
Promising to do something you wanted in exchange	4% (2)	11% (4)	13% (5)	20% (3)

Note. Columns sum to more than 100% because participants could select more than one response.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Participants' reasons for agreeing to engage in the sexual activity. Participants were asked why they had agreed to engage in the sexual activity. Some of the reasons that they reported involved ending an unpleasant situation; others involved anticipating a positive outcome (see Table 8).

Among women, three of the reasons for agreeing distinguished between the positive and negative situations. Two reasons that involved ending an unpleasantness were more common in negative experiences than in positive experiences. Specifically, women reported having agreed in order to avoid feeling guilty or inadequate more often in negative situations than in positive situations, $p = .003$. Likewise, women reported having agreed in order to end the badgering more often in negative situations than in positive situations, $p = .001$. Conversely, other reasons related to anticipating positive personal outcomes (e.g., being convinced that it would be pleasurable, being turned on, deciding that they were ready). Women reporting these reasons more often for positive situations than for negative situations, $p < .001$.

Among men, none of their reasons for agreeing distinguished between the positive and negative situations.

Table 8

Participants' Reasons for Agreeing to Engage in the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 51)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 37)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 39)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 15)
Negative emotions:				
The other person guilted me into it				
I felt like I led the other person on / I didn't want to be a tease.	22% (11)	54% (20) **	13% (5)	33% (5)
I didn't want to seem sexually inadequate.				
Stopping the badgering/pleading:				
It was just easier to agree	31% (16)	68% (25) **	33% (13)	47% (7)
To get the other person to stop asking				
Avoiding break-up or infidelity:				
So the other person would not break up with me or go outside the relationship for sexual activity	4% (2)	11% (4)	0% (0)	7% (1)
For the good of the relationship:				
I wanted to make the relationship stronger				
Compromise is part of any relationship				
The other person had done the same for me before	55% (28)	59% (22)	56% (22)	33% (5)
To make the other person happy				
I felt obligated because of the relationship				
Anticipated personal positive outcomes:				
The other person convinced me that it would be pleasurable				
I was turned on	86% (44)	51% (19)***	74% (29)	67% (10)
I decided I was ready				
The other person was attractive				
Because I wanted more sexual experience				
Bargaining:				
So the other person would do something I wanted in exchange	0% (0)	3% (1)	3% (1)	0% (0)

Note. Columns sum to more than 100% because participants could select more than one response.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Participants' reports of their and the other person's intoxication. We sought to assess what role, if any, intoxication had on participants' experiences. Participants were first

asked about their own alcohol use around the time of the sexual experience. They then responded to a parallel question regarding the other person's alcohol use. Results (see Table 9) showed that the percentages of participants and their partners who had been intoxicated were similar for positive and negative experiences.

Table 9

Participants' Reports of Their and the Other Person's Intoxication at the Time

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (n = 51)	Negative (n = 37)	Positive (n = 39)	Negative (n = 15)
<i>Participants' reports of their own intoxication at the time</i>				
Intoxicated				
Yes, [I had been drinking,] and I felt intoxicated	10% (5)	16% (6)	21% (8)	33% (5)
Not Intoxicated:				
No, I had not been drinking.	88% (45)	84% (31)	79% (30)	67% (10)
Yes, [I had been drinking,] but I did not feel intoxicated.				
	$p = .517$		$p = .480$	
<i>Participants' reports of the other person's intoxication at the time</i>				
The other person was intoxicated:				
Yes, [he/she had been drinking,] and he/she seemed intoxicated.	10% (5)	14% (5)	13% (5)	20% (3)
The other person was not intoxicated:				
No, he/she had not been drinking.	90% (46)	81% (30)	87% (33)	73% (11)
Yes, [he/she had been drinking,] but he/she did not seem intoxicated.				
	$p = .734$		$p = .666$	

Participants' Conceptualization of Their Experiences as Compromise and/or Coercion

Participants had been asked to rate how much, if at all, each experience felt like compromise and how much it felt like coercion to examine how participants conceptualized their positive and negative experiences. Participants' responses for each question could range from not at all (0) to very much (6). Independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to examine similarities and differences in women's and men's labeling of their positive and negative experiences as compromise or coercion. There was not a significant difference in women's labeling of their positive and negative experiences as compromise; $t(86) = 1.58, p = .12$. However, there was a significant difference in women's labeling of their experiences as coercion; $t(86) = -5.80, p < .0001$. Women labeled their negative experiences as significantly more coercive than their positive experience. There were no significant differences in men's labeling of their positive and negative experiences as either compromise; $t(51) = 0.53, p = .60$ or coercion; $t(51) = -1.00, p = .32$. Graphical representations of women's (Figures 1 and 2) and men's (Figures 3 and 4) ratings of their positive and negative experiences are presented below.

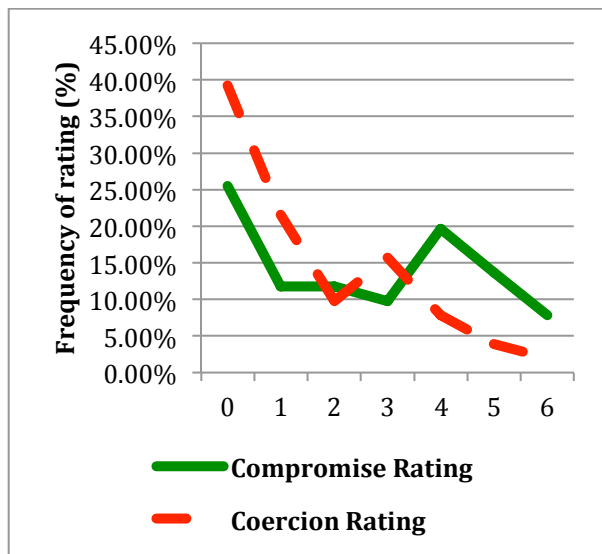


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of women's ratings of their positive experiences as compromise or as coercion

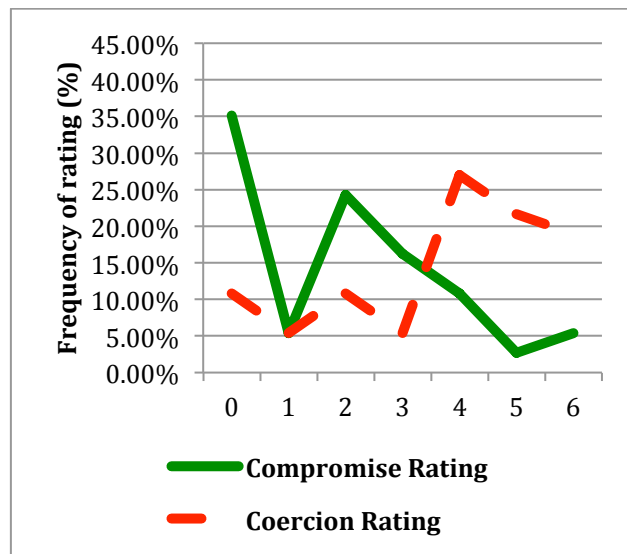


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of women's ratings of their negative experiences as compromise or as coercion

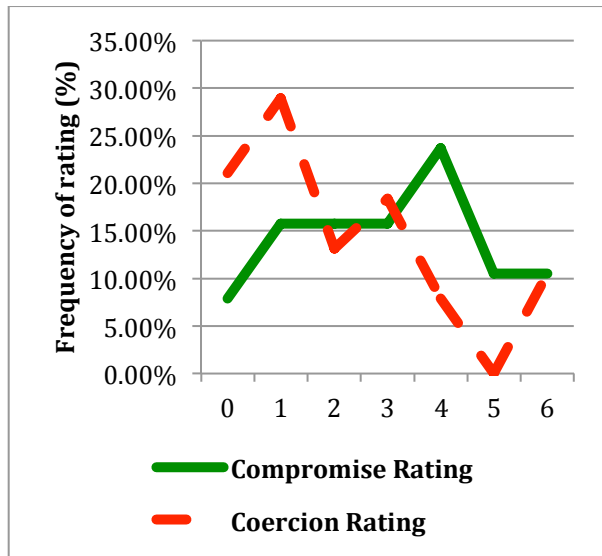


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of men's ratings of their positive experiences as compromise or as coercion

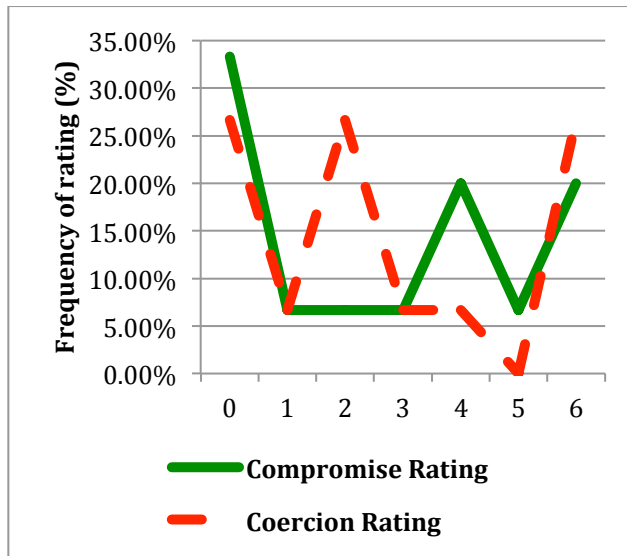


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of men's ratings of their negative experiences as compromise or as coercion

Positive and Negative Valence of Participants' Affective Reactions

Furthermore, although participants had to categorize their experience as generally positive or generally negative from the onset of the study, they were also asked to rate exactly how negative or how positive they considered their experiences. The data for women and men are represented in Figures 5 and 6 respectively. Participants' ratings of their experiences were generally consistent with their previous categorization (i.e., positive experiences were generally rated positively; negative experiences were generally rated negatively). However, there was some variability in how positive or how negative participants rated their negative and positive experiences, respectively. It is also interesting that there were some women and some men who rated their positive and negative experiences as more neutral than either positive or negative.

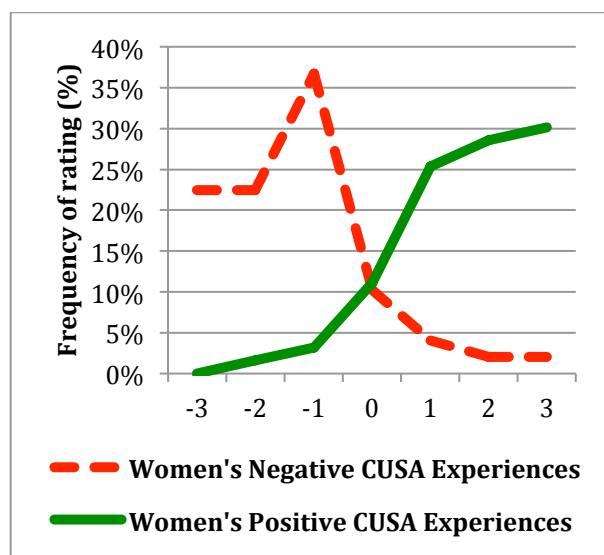


Figure 5. Frequency distribution of women's ratings of the valence of their negative and positive experiences

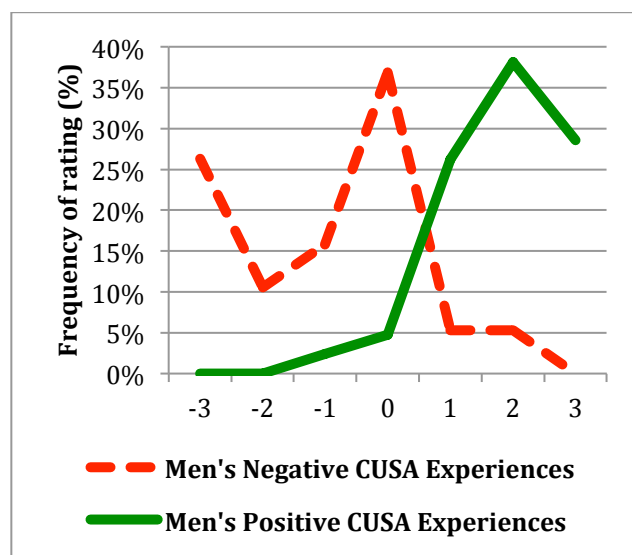


Figure 6. Frequency distribution of men's ratings of the valence of their negative and positive experiences

Qualitative Data

Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. Thematic analysis allows researchers to summarize the major aspects of qualitative data in order to examine similarities and differences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Our analysis was conducted under the guidelines of Braun and Clarke. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, an inductive, data-driven approach (rather than a deductive theory-driven approach) was most appropriate for this analysis. Qualitative responses below are quoted exactly as written by participants, including any spelling or grammatical errors.

Factors that made participants feel generally positive about their positive experience. In an open-ended question, participants had been asked to explain what had made them feel generally positive about their positive experience. Several themes were identified from their responses.

The experience had been sexually pleasurable. It was very common for both women and men to discuss having received sexual pleasure during the positive experience, even though they did not want to engage in the activity, at least initially. For example, one woman described the following situation with her boyfriend:

[*Situation?*] “I stayed over at my boyfriend's house and it was early in the morning and he wanted to have intercourse. I wasn't crazy about the idea, being half asleep, but once we started it ended up being enjoyable.” [*Why positive?*] “I ended up orgasming and felt good and he did as well.” (P#1011, F, age 20, positive situation)

Another woman described similar circumstances in which she was in a bad mood, rather than physically tired:

[*Situation?*] “Originally did not want to engage in the activity because I had a bad day and wasn't in the best of moods. He wanted to have sex with me and it ended up putting me in a better mood because I felt very cared for” [*Why positive?*] “I was super cheerful after and I felt closer to him” (P#1038, F, age 18, positive situation)

Some men also discussed similar reasons for feeling positively about their experience.

This man described his experience with being talked into receiving oral sex and engaging in sexual intercourse with a woman he had been dating for several months:

[*Situation?*] “There have been times where I have been tired after a long day at work but my significant other would talk me into having sex anyways.” [*Other person (OP) said?*] “They just asked politely several times and i didn't feel like saying no.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I did not want to disappoint my significant other and I was not particularly opposed to the sexual activity.” [*Why positive?*] “I initially was not in the mood for sex but I was talked into it and enjoyed it.” (P#2006, M, age 19, positive situation)

An additional example of men citing sexual pleasure as a reason their experience was positive comes from this man who discussed his reaction to a novel experience with a girlfriend:

[*Situation?*] “Said person wanted to experiment with toys in the bedroom. I was not comfortable with this, it made me feel weird using props.” [*OP said?*] “They explained that we should at least try it and if it is still weird that we could stop.” [*Why positive?*] “I enjoyed it. Plain and simple.” (P#1081, M, age 19, positive situation)

They had satisfied the other person. Other individuals labeled their experience as positive even when they did not explicitly discuss obtaining sexual pleasure. Many participants reported having agreed to engage in undesired sexual activity specifically to please the other

person. Some of these women and men then labeled their experience as positive because the other person was satisfied. This man described such a circumstance with his girlfriend:

[*Situation?*] “Girlfriend and I were lying in bed. She wanted to have sex. I was tired from a long day and wanted to sleep.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “Because I love her and convinced myself losing a bit of sleep wouldn't hurt if it meant giving her satisfaction.”

[*Why positive?*] “I was satisfied that she was satisfied.” (P#1147, M, age 22, positive situation)

This woman discussed her similar experience agreeing to sexual activity with her boyfriend to please him though she, at least initially, preferred another nonsexual activity:

[*Situation?*] “We were Netflixing and chilling and he wanted to touch me but I was tired and really liked the movie so I wanted to watch it. He kept trying so I just gave in. We made out and touched and then I felt good about it because it was pleasurable but I was still kinda irritated because I missed the damn movie. So it was kinda bittersweet.”

[*Reasons agreed?*] “I felt guilty for inviting someone over but it being boring.” [*Why positive?*] “The pleasure of it and satisfying my partner.” (P#1218, F, age 19, positive situation)

They liked their partner's positive approach. Some participants wrote that their partner's approach for convincing them to engage in the unwanted sexual activity led to more positive reactions. One woman described her positive experience with a boyfriend as such:

[*Situation?*] “We were kissing and I wasn't sure if I wanted to go further right then, but he wanted to. I was a little afraid and unsure because of the state of our relationship.”

[*OP said?*] “He told me he loved me and said it was okay if I didn't want to and he wouldn't make me do anything, but said that's what he really wanted.” [*Reasons*

agreed?] “He made me feel safe and I thought maybe it wouldn't be a big deal.” [*Why positive?*] “He made me feel safe before during and after.” (P#1041, F, age 20, positive situation)

Another woman described a similar situation with a previously platonic friend with whom she had reservations about engaging in sexual activity:

[*Situation?*] “There was a large amount of alcohol involved. I did not want to engage in sex because I had never had sex and I was worried it would change the dynamic of the relationship.” [*OP said?*] “promised nothing would change and that they would be very gentle and stop if i wanted.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I was comfortable with the partner.” [*Why positive?*] “The partner was very understanding of my fears and was very caring toward me. Also it did not change the dynamic.” (P#1063, F, age 18, positive situation)

A third woman also discussed a comparable situation in which she agreed to engage in activity that she initially did not want, because of how her partner approached the situation and addressed her concerns:

[*Situation?*] “The person and I discussed sleeping over (and just kissing/making out). I questioned my morals and religion, so I did not want to do this.” [*OP said?*] “He told me that it was completely my decision and he would respect it.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I trusted that he would not push my limits that I had set.” [*Why positive?*] “He did not push my limits whatsoever, and I felt loved and respected” (P#1124, F, age 19, positive situation)

A male participant, cited previously, wrote a similar response. When his girlfriend wanted to “experiment with toys in the bedroom,” he was initially uncomfortable with the idea. One of the reasons that he agreed was that his girlfriend said that they “should at least try it and

if it is still weird that we could stop.” He agreed because “I trusted the person and believed that if I were truly uncomfortable the experience could stop” (P#1081, M, age 19, positive situation).

The experience had a positive impact on relationship. In contrast, for some other individuals, their experience was positive because of what occurred after the sexual encounter, rather than during it. Several women and men discussed obtaining desirable relationship outcomes and/or increased intimacy from CUSA. One woman described agreeing to engage in sexual activity with a man with whom she was in “the talking stage,” after her concerns about the impact on the relationship were assuaged:

[*Situation?*] “We were talking to each other and it was just the right moment and we both agreed we were fine with the situation and doing it.” [*OP said?*] “That he really liked me and was happy to be with me.” [*Why positive?*] “We are currently still talking and he still likes me and wants to hang out more.” (P#2014, F, age 19, positive situation)

This man described a parallel experience with his girlfriend in which sexual activity led to increased intimacy:

[*Situation?*] “We were hanging out and she played to rough and we stopped playing around. But then she eventually started to touch me and then it led to sexual intercourse. I did not want to have sex, mainly because she made me angry and I was not in a good mood.” [*Why positive?*] “I had sex with my girlfriend and it was a definitive part of our relationship because it was the first time we actually go into deep connections with each other.” (P#1069, M, age 20, positive situation)

Factors that made participants feel generally negative about their negative experience. In a parallel question, participants had been asked to explain what had made them

feel generally negative about their negative experience. The following themes were noted from their responses.

Desire to maintain platonic relationships. A common theme describing negative aspects of participants' negative experiences was that they did not have romantic feelings for or sexual attraction toward the other person or desired to maintain their platonic relationship with the other person. Several women and a few men reported this reason. For example, one woman stated:

'I didn't like him as anything other than a friend and was not attracted to him at all. After it happened he told everyone about his school about it including the guy I had a huge crush on.' (P#1021, F, age 19, negative situation)

Others, such as this woman, reported that the sexual experience had a negative impact on previously platonic relationships:

[*Situation?*] "We were in this persons basement and had been drinking. The other person wanted to touch my genital area but I wasn't into it. I did not want to because he was my friend and I wasn't attracted to him." [*Why negative?*] "I didn't want to and then after it we became super awkward around each other and not really friends for a while."
(P#1057, F, age 19, negative situation)

This man reported a similar negative impact on his friendship after being talked into sexual intercourse by a friend:

[*Situation?*] "We were snap chatting and she began sending sexual snapchats that led to us hanging out and having sex, I didn't initially want to because we were friends and it would make things awkward in the future." [*Why negative?*] "I regretted it because it ruined our friendship" (P#1085, M, age 19, negative situation)

Discomfort with the circumstances. Another common reason women and men reported for feeling negative was discomfort with the circumstances around the sexual experience. Some individuals reported that the sexual encounter felt rushed or occurred too soon in the relationship. One woman shared such an experience:

[*Situation?*] “Kissing lead into oral sex. I did not want to participate because i felt that we had not been dating for very long. I felt pressured and felt that he would be upset with me if i did not participate in the activity.” [*Why negative?*] “I still feel that we did things way to early into the relationship. I wish i had waited until the time felt right. I regret it since we currently aren't together and the relationship did not last long.” (P#1061, F, age 19, negative situation)

This man discussed similar discomfort with the timing of his sexual experience:

[*Situation?*] “Alcohol was involved. They wanted to have sex. I want to actually know and really like a person before consenting to sexual activity.” [*Why negative?*] “i did not care enough for the other person” (P#1126, M, age 18, negative situation)

Another man also expressed experiencing discomfort with persistent requests for sexual intercourse from his girlfriend:

[*Situation?*] “Making out, she wanted to have sex, I hadn't had sex before.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I thought I should because we were dating and she was 2 years older than me, I didn't want her to think I was immature.” [*Why negative?*] “I wasn't comfortable with her.” (P#1161, M, age 19, negative situation)

Finally, the following woman’s experience with a boyfriend offers a unique illustration of how the timing of sexual requests and other contextual variables influence negative experiences of CUSA:

[*Situation?*] “I had lied to him about going and talking to a guy who i used to be friends with and always had a crush on me. We were no longer friends and that was the point of the conversation but my boyfriend was really upset. He had asked me before about engaging in anal sex and I did not feel comfortable with that. I had heard stories about the pain and some people's inability to control their bowels.” [*OP said?*] “He was angry at first, but calmed down a bit after we talked it out. But when we later began to engage in sexual activity, he asked if we could have anal sex, and convinced me that he would fully forgive me for lying to him if we did.” [*Why negative?*] “i felt that if I was going to experience that particular activity, it should not have been under coercion and I felt guilty about using my body to gain forgiveness” (P#1070, F, age 20, negative situation)

Unmet relationship expectations. One theme that only women discussed about their negative experiences was feeling that the relationship became strictly sexual, despite their interest in pursuing a more committed relationship with the other person. Some women reported that the other person terminated contact with them immediately after the sexual activity. This sometimes occurred in uncommitted relationships such as with this woman:

[*Relationship with OP?*] “We have been on and off for about a year and a half, however we were never official (boyfriend/girlfriend). Finally one day after trying for a long time, I caved in and decided to have sex with him-- keep in mind I've never had sex yet. After it was done, I felt negative as in I felt disgusted and ashamed of myself.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I felt pressured and thought maybe he'll finally want to date” [*Why negative?*] “After we had sex, he didn't talk to me again and bragged about it to all of his friends.” (P#1067, F, age 18, negative situation)

It also occurred with ex-partners, as this woman reported:

[*Situation?*] “My boyfriend and I had been broken up for about a year and had not had sex while we were dating. He started talking to me again after I had broken up with my next boyfriend, to whom I had lost my virginity. In the year that we were broken up he had gained a reputation for being a "player" and sleeping around. I did not want to have sex with him for this reason but he promised me that I was different and this would be different. Afterwards, he stopped talking to me.” [*OP said?*] He told me that I was different, that I was special. He asked how I could even think that I was on the same level as those other girls and he would never treat me badly. [*Reasons agreed?*] “I believed that he had feelings for me again and it would possibly lead to getting back together.”

[*Why negative?*] “Directly after, we went to a study group for a class we had together but he insisted on taking two cars because my car was at his house and his parents could come home while we were gone. He stopped to get food on the way to the study group so I was there before he was. When we walked in he didn't even say acknowledge me and even though we had been talking again and hanging out for about a month he stopped talking to me completely directly after.” (P#1093, F, age 19, negative situation)

Another woman reported a very similar situation with a recent ex-boyfriend who explicitly lied to her:

[*Situation?*] “They told me they wanted to get back together and I was like Okay, then they suggested sex and I thought it was weird and unsure if I should do it but then we ended up engaging in sexual intercourse.” [*OP said?*] “They told me we would be getting back together but after that they lied!!! how rude.” [*Why negative?*] “They were an awful person and were just using me.” (P#2010, F, age 18, negative situation)

Unchanged reason for not wanting. Some participants reported feeling negative about their experiences because their disinterest in the activity remained unchanged. For example, one woman agreed to perform oral sex despite a lack of interest in order to stop repeated requests. She reported that the experience was negative because “I didn't want to do it in the first place and I still was not happy about it afterwards” (P#1044, F, age 19, negative situation).

Other women and men discussed initially declining because they were tired or otherwise uninterested in sexual activity at that time and that this remained unchanged or worsened after agreeing to engage in the sexual activity. For example, this woman stated,

[*Situation?*] “I was with my boyfriend and he wanted to have sex but I did not because I was really tired. He eventually talked me into it, and we had sex, but it made me more tired and resentful.” [*Why negative?*] “I was really tired and knew I was doing it against my initial feeling.” (P#2060, F, age 18, negative situation)

This man described a similar experience:

[*Situation?*] “We were cuddling, probably making out / Partner wanted to go farther, specifically genital + hand activity / I just wasn't in the mood.” [*Why negative?*] “It wasn't as pleasurable as it should have been” (P#2054, M, age 18, negative situation)

Moral conflict. Several participants discussed having negative reactions because the sexual encounter conflicted with their morals for a variety of reasons. For this woman, it was due to infidelity on her part:

[*Situation?*] “Convincing me to kiss him while watching a movie. I was not planning on kissing him because at the time I had a boyfriend and I felt bad about the situation. During the movie he just went on to kiss me and I kissed him back, he convinced me that my current boyfriend wouldn't find out and that everything was fine. He said he didn't

mean to do wrong he just had the urge to kiss me.” [*Why negative?*] “I felt bad because I cheated on my boyfriend behind his back and I couldn't imagine him kissing another girl behind my back.” (P#1058, F, age 19, negative situation)

That was similar to this man's experience with kissing a friend of a friend while in a relationship with another woman:

[*Situation?*] “We were both dancing intimately and then we kissed/made out. I had a girlfriend at the time that was not her” [*Why negative?*] “I felt remorse as I knew that if my girlfriend at the time were ever to find out she would be furious and it would terminate the relationship.” (P#1163, M, age 18, negative situation)

For some other individuals the conflict was because the partner was someone close to another person with whom they had a previous romantic relationship. One man described this experience:

[*Situation?*] “friends of an ex girlfriend, alcohol was involved, oral sex” [*OP said?*] “kept asking for sex” [*Why negative?*] “was ex girlfriend's friend” (P#1130, M, age 23, negative situation)

Another man also described similar circumstances.

[*Situation?*] “we met while I was out drinking, got too drunk, she ended up coming home with me, and we had sexual relations” [*OP said?*] “repeatedly asked to come over and guilted me into it” [*Why negative?*] “she was friends with my ex” (P#1145, M, age 23, negative situation)

This third man experienced a similar conflict due to a previous sexual relationship with the other person's daughter:

[*Relationship with OP?*] “she was a mom of a girl i was friends with in high school”

[*Situation?*] “she texted me asking if i wanted to hook up, she wanted sex, i felt bad that i already had sex with her daughter” [*Why negative?*] she had a daughter that i already had sex with (P#1169, M, age 21, negative situation)

A few participants reported moral conflicts about engaging in premarital sexual activity.

This man reported a negative reaction after agreeing to sexual intercourse with a previously platonic friend because of his desire to maintain abstinence:

[*Situation?*] “Alcohol started it all, then we just started talking and dancing. I wanted to save sex and sexual activity for marriage” [*Why negative?*] “guilt” (P#1153, M, age 19, negative situation)

Negative aspects of positive situations. Though participants labeled their experience(s) as either positive or negative, to assess for possible ambivalence, we asked participants if they had had any negative feelings about their positive experiences and any positive feelings about their negative experiences (“Even though you felt generally negative/positive about the experience, did you have any positive/negative feelings about it? If so, what made you feel that way?”). The themes about ambivalence regarding positive experiences are presented first below.

Negative reactions to the other person’s approach. Despite reporting that their experience was generally positive, some participants reported having a negative reaction to the method or approach of the other person. For example, one woman discussed having a negative reaction to being talked into the activity by a casual sexual partner, rather than being able to initiate the activity herself:

[*Situation?*] “we had been drinking a little and it was valentines day and he wanted oral sex and i didn't want to because we had just started being together and once you do one

thing its a downward spiral” [*Why positive?*] “it was good and i liked him” [*Any negative?*] “i wish he hadn't of asked and i would have done it voluntarily” (P#1004, F, age 18, positive situation)

This man described a similar negative reaction to being talked into sexual intercourse with a girlfriend when he was younger:

[*Situation?*] “We had been making out and I went down on her for the first time. I was nervous because I was still pretty young but she like it. I started kissing her again after and she then started repeatedly begging for sex. She said she loved me (for the first time) and kept asking for sex. I didn't want to because I was definitely not ready yet.” [*Why positive?*] “It was fun and I felt close to her at the time.” [*Any negative?*] “I did, because it felt weird being pressured into doing it. I was also only 15 so it was pretty early on.” (P#1208, M, age 19, positive situation)

The relationship was limited to sexual activity. Another common negative factor in participants’ positive experiences was a concern that their relationship with the other person would subsequently be defined by or limited to sexual activity. As one male participant expressed simply, “it made the relationship more about sex” (P#1107, M, age 19, positive situation). His reaction is similar to this woman who was talked into sexual intercourse by an exclusive dating partner:

[*Situation?*] “He started kissing me and wanted to take things further, but i didn't. He kept trying to convince me. He wanted to have sex. I didn't initially want to do it because I wasn't in the mood.” [*Why positive?*] “It felt good and it made me feel positive that I gave him something he wanted” [*Any negative?*] “I felt like he was just using me since all he wanted to do was have sex” (P#1160, F, age 19, positive situation)

Others also discussed feeling used by the other person. One woman described CUSA with a close friend; she described it as a positive experience, but it did not result in a desired outcome:

[*Situation?*] “We had done other sexual activities but I had never had sex before so I didn't want to initially, but he convinced me” [*Why positive?*] “It wasn't as bad as I thought” [*Any negative?*] “I felt like that's all he wanted and after I gave it to him he didn't want me anymore” (P#1044, F, age 19, positive situation)

A male participant also reported a similar reaction after a female friend talked him into sexual intercourse by offering him money to presumably make up for the financial loss he would have had from not going to work that day:

[*Situation?*] “I hadn't seen her in awhile and we talked a little bit and she clearly was sending me signals. I wasn't fully attracted to her but she offered to get me off of work for \$60 therefore I felt obligated to engage in sexual activity with her.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “Because she was a lot skinnier than she was when I last saw her and because of the \$60.” [*Why positive?*] “The sex was pretty good.” [*Any negative?*] “I felt guilty and somewhat like a sex toy.” (P#1062, M, age 20, positive situation)

Loss of virginity. A few women and men discussed having some negative reaction to their positive experience because they were no longer virgins. One man's experience of being talked into oral sex and sexual intercourse at 16 years old with a girlfriend is documented below:

[*Situation?*] “We had been courting eachother for awhile and pretty much as soon as we started dating she wanted to go from just making out to full on sex. I had never been anywhere beyond making out and wasn't sure if I wanted to or how to even perform those actions. I am religious and at the time considered waiting for marriage.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I was young and inexperienced and thought I might as well” [*Why positive?*]

“It felt good and I felt cool and good in the relationship. More grown up” [*Any negative?*] “I lost my virginity and I cant get it back” (P#1026, M, age 19, positive situation)

This woman’s experience with being talked into sexual intercourse by her boyfriend was similar to the previous example:

[*Situation?*] “I was a freshman in highschool with my first and current boyfriend. We were at my house alone, had not gone any farther than making out, and I was just curious about what it felt like. I wasn't ready to lose my virginity, but he convinced me and I was happy with the decision.” [*OP said?*] “He reassured me that he loved me, wanted to be with me, and planned on spending his life with me. Worked out for him, because we are still together.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I was curious about what it felt like, and wanted to feel closer to him, as well as make him happy.” [*Why positive?*] “We became much more comfortable around each other.” [*Any negative?*] “Yes, I did not like losing my virginity at a young age.” (P#2044, F, age 18, positive situation)

Both of these individuals reported that their experiences were generally positive because they were pleasurable and resulted in positive relationship outcomes. However, both also reported some regret about how their first experience of PVI occurred.

Finally, one participant’s explanation for why she did not have any negative reactions to her positive experience with a long-term boyfriend was also interesting:

[*Situation?*] “We were in bed, he wanted to have sex. I was tired, he really didn't pressure me that much I was just being lazy and wanted to not do anything (which I recognize and know that I am quite lazy).” [*OP said?*] “Probably some corny joke and then kinda like kiss me or something and then said "okay i'm sorry I am not going to

pressure you into anything... but I really want it” [Reasons agreed?] “because I love my boyfriend and he respects me so much. He deserves it even if I am being lazy sometimes and want to sleep/ watch netflix instead hahaha” [Why positive?] “This is super weird to answer but because it feels good??? and I never regret it??? (there are question marks because I am genuinely uncomfortable even though this anonymous)” [Any negative?] “nah. I guess I should feel negative because some might consider this situation kind of "rape-y" but I really don't think it's bad that he convinced me to do it. I always give consent, sometimes I'm not feeling it and I have to tell him no, but sometimes I talk myself into it because I'm always happy afterwards... kinda like going to the gym when you don't feel like it!” (P#1024, F, age 19, positive situation)

Positive aspects of the negative situations. Participants were also asked if there were any positive aspects to their negative situations. The themes from their responses are discussed below.

The participants accomplished a sex-related goal. As noted earlier, some individuals with positive experiences reported some negative feelings relating to no longer being virgins. Conversely, some women and men with negative experiences reported positive feelings about the same or similar outcomes. For example, this woman expressed some ambivalence about being talked into some novel sexual activities by a male friend:

[Situation?] “My friend and I were making out, and he wanted to give me oral sex which I was not comfortable with. I had told him no, but he kept persisting.” [Talked into?] “Being on the receiving part of oral sex, and intercourse.” [Reasons agreed?] “I wanted him to be happy with it.” [Why negative?] “I felt rushed, I hadn't done anything before him and he rushed me.” [Any positive?] “Yes, I was glad to have gotten things over

with. Although I wasn't comfortable being on the receiving end of oral sex, it ultimately led to me losing my virginity and I was glad to of gotten done with that.” (P#1014, F, age 19, negative situation)

This man discussed a similar reaction after being talked into sexual intercourse for the first time by an older girlfriend:

[*Situation?*] “Making out, she wanted to have sex, I hadn't had sex before.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I thought I should because we were dating and she was 2 years older than me, I didn't want her to think I was immature.” [*Why negative?*] “I wasn't comfortable with her.” [*Why positive?*] “I had lost my virginity.” (P#1161, M, age 19, negative situation)

They had satisfied their partner. Another positive aspect that participants identified from their negative experiences was feeling as if they had pleased or satisfied their partner. For example, one woman described a situation with her boyfriend that seemed to be very negative for her, but she identified pleasing him as the one positive aspect:

[*Situation?*] “I was teasing him but I did not want to have sex. He wanted me to have sex with him but I did not want to at that time.” [*OP said?*] “He said I shouldn't have been teasing him and that we are going to have sex tonight.” [*Talked into?*] “Oral sex and regular sex.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I agreed because he was my boyfriend and he really wanted to have sex with me.” [*Why negative?*] “I didn't want to have sex with him but he made me have sex with him. I was uncomfortable the entire time and did not like it.” [*Any positive?*] “The only positive feeling i had after that was that I made him happy by having sex with him.” (P#1135, F, age 18, negative situation)

Another woman's experience highlights the same theme, but in unique circumstances involving being talked into anal sex by her boyfriend:

[*Situation?*] “Before I took two tabs of LSD my boyfriend had asked whether or not it would be considered rape if he had sex with me while on the drug, for I could not then give consent. I assured him I would want sex while on my trip. After I take the acid and I am mid trip, my boyfriend asked me if we could try anal. I was taken off guard because we had not been together for long and I was on acid. I felt unsure about it but I agreed. It was painful.” [*OP said?*] “He just said, "Hey, I think we should try anal tonight, what do you think?" I was silent for a while. He then told me I would probably enjoy it better because I was tripping. I then just said sure. And then it was on.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I did not know a good reason to say no at the particular time. And I was on acid. And he was my boyfriend so I felt a slight obligation, I suppose.” [*Why negative?*] “I felt somewhat tricked, or like he had planned it. I didn't know for sure, because I also thought that could have been a feeling I had as a result of the acid. I'll never know for sure.”

[*Any positive?*] “I felt positive about it because he enjoyed it at least.” (P#1158, F, age 19, negative situation)

While this theme was apparent in many women’s responses, only one man’s data reflected this theme:

[*Situation?*] “We were cuddling, probably making out / Partner wanted to go farther, specifically genital + hand activity / I just wasn't in the mood” [*OP said?*] “They wanted to prove they could make me orgasm” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I would normally be okay with it” [*Why negative?*] “It wasn't as pleasurable as it should have been” [*Any positive?*] “It made my partner more satisfied” (P#2054, M, age 18, negative situation)

Prior feelings for other person. For some participants, it appeared that positive feelings they had toward the other person before the negative experience seemed to buffer some of the

negative affect they experienced. This woman's experience of being talked into sexual intercourse by a boyfriend highlights this theme:

[*Situation?*] "I was at my boyfriend's apartment and we started making out and then started taking off clothes and then he asked if I wanted to have sex, to which I said okay, even though I didn't want to because I had never had sex before and I wasn't ready but he really wanted to so I gave in." [*OP said?*] "It'll be okay. I'm planning on being with you for a long time. It won't hurt." [*Reasons agreed?*] "I was tired of him asking and I felt like I had to do it eventually." [*Why negative?*] "I wasn't ready." [*Any positive?*] "It was at least with someone that I trusted" (P#1011, F, age 20, negative situation)

Another woman described a similar experience with being talked into sexual intercourse by her current boyfriend:

[*Situation?*] "We had had sex previously that night and my partner wanted more. I was sexually pleased from the first round and wasn't interested in going again" [*OP said?*] "Asking repeatedly and reassuring me that once we started I would be glad that I agreed" [*Reasons agreed?*] "To have him stop asking" [*Why negative?*] "That the only way I could get him to stop is by doing what he wanted" [*Any positive?*] "He is my boyfriend that I really love I was just annoyed that he wouldn't listen to my initial choice" (P#1102, F, age 19, negative situation)

It is interesting that though this woman described feeling pressured into the activity as the only way to stop the repeated requests from her boyfriend, the experience seemed to be conceptualized as simple annoyance.

Validation. An interesting theme in a few participants' responses was that though their experience was negative, they obtained a sense of validation or affirmation from it for different

reasons. For example, one man discussed his experience of being talked into oral sex and sexual intercourse by a close female friend who was in a relationship with someone else:

[*Situation?*] “Tons of drinking, they wanted to have sex but I knew they were with somebody else” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I was drunk and had been attracted to her already” [*Why negative?*] “She had a boyfriend of 2 years” [*Any positive?*] “A few selfish ones. I had low key wanted to get with her but never really pursued it and then she came onto me. Kinda felt like I had some pretty decent game” (P#1082, M, age 19, negative situation)

This woman described a very similar sense of validation after she was talked into sexual activity with an ex-boyfriend who was in a new relationship:

[*Situation?*] “He asked me to come over to his house and hangout. The other person wanted oral sex. I did not want it because he has a girlfriend.” [*OP said?*] “Kept pressuring me by saying it is fine nothing bad will happen she won't ever find out.” [*Talked into?*] “Kissing, blowjob, and fingering.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I was confused and caught up in the moment and I wanted to feel old feelings from when we used to be together.” [*Why negative?*] “I felt bad for his girlfriend” [*Any positive?*] “Yes I did because I thought he still wants me even though he is with her.” (P#1122, F, age 19, negative situation)

Participants’ comparisons of their positive and negative situations. Participants who reported both a positive and a negative experience were asked to compare the two experiences and indicate what made one more positive or negative than the other (“What was different about these two situations that made one more negative or positive than the other?”).

Difference in emotional connection or sexual attraction. Some participants identified differences in how much they cared about the other person or differences in the level of commitment as factors that influenced their emotional reactions. For example, this woman contrasted a positive experience with her boyfriend with a negative experience she had with another person with whom she had “no relationship”:

[*Difference?*] “I was dating and really cared about the person involved in the more positive situation.” (P#1078, F, age 19)

Another woman reported a similar difference in the strength of her emotional connection to the men in her positive and her negative experiences: “One I was in love, the other I wasn't” (P#1077, F, age 21). She had previously expressed that though both experiences happened when she was “not in the mood,” and involved verbal tactics to induce positive mood (e.g., compliments and terms of endearment), the positive experience was such because: “It never feels wrong with that person.” This is in contrast to her reason for agreeing to engage in the requested activity in the negative experience: “I felt obligated for some reason - I still don't know that reason” (P#1077).

Some men also discussed the difference in their feelings toward the other person. For example, one man wrote the following to describe his reactions to two experiences of being pressured into anal sex with other men: “In the first situation, he was someone that I knew and trusted. In the second, we had just met” (P#1017, M, age 19).

Similarly, another man contrasted his positive experience with a male friend with his negative experience with a male manager at a former job by noting differences in both attraction and romantic intention:

[*Difference?*] “The negative experience was with someone I had no desire of dating and the positive was with a friend.” [*Reason agreed to positive experience?*] “I was attracted to him.” [*Why negative experience was negative*] “He was not someone I would date and I had no idea with whom he had had sexual relations beforehand.” (P#2061, M, age 20)

Dishonesty and negative relationship outcomes. It was interesting that some women discussed having varying reactions not due to factors specific to the sexual encounter, but due to what became of their relationship with the other person after the fact. This woman’s comparison of her positive experience with a friend and a negative experience in a casual relationship illustrates this point: “one was positive because it ended up that we liked each other and started dating and the other one i was just used” (P#1039, F, age 19)

For some other women, it was especially important that the other person had been honest about their intentions for the relationship. For example, one woman first described a negative experience in a casual sexual relationship and then a positive experience with another man she was dating nonexclusively. In describing the difference between these two experiences, she stated:

“The first [negative] situation, the guy would talk me up and mess with my mind. He would say cute things to make it seem like he was genuinely interested in me. The second [positive] situation, he would tell me straight up how it was. He did not sugar coat anything.” (P#1162, F, age 19)

Another woman also discussed differences in honesty about intentions and relationship outcomes as factors that influenced her reactions to her experiences. She reported that her negative experience was with an ex-boyfriend who had reassured her about having positive intentions

toward her, but who later discontinued contact after the sexual encounter. In contrast, she felt that the other person in the positive experience had actually been honest:

“In the negative situation, I was completely shut out and ignored afterwards feeling angry, worthless, and betrayed. / In the positive situation, the person had actually been being truthful and afterwards we were closer and we did continue to see each other and to talk. (P#1093, F, age 20)

Mutually beneficial. Many of the participants who had agreed to both positive and negative experiences reported having done so to satisfy the other person. For some, the difference between the positive and negative situations involved whether they had received sexual pleasure as well. As one woman stated about her experiences with two boyfriends,

“One was negative because only one person was getting the pleasure or what they wanted out of the sexual activity and the other was positive because it became a mutual thing. Both partners wanted each other.” (P#1047, F, age 20)

Another woman similarly discussed differences in her sexual interest and satisfaction during each experience:

“in the negative one, i was only doing it to make my boyfriend happy. in the positive one, i did it because it made me happy as well.” (P#2060, F, age 18)

Her comparison is interesting because of her reasons for not wanting to engage in the sexual activity during each experience. In the negative experience, she reported feeling too tired, and in the positive one she reported being physically ill. Though both of these reasons involve physical wellness, it might have seemed that being physically ill would have made the experience more aversive. However, that was not the case.

Subjective experiences of pressure and willingness. Though by definition, both the positive and negative experiences were situations in which someone expressed not wanting to engage in a sexual behavior, but eventually conceded to it, some participants discussed subjectively feeling more pressured or taken advantaged of in the negative experiences. For example, one woman discussed two experiences involving novel sexual activities, receiving oral sex in the positive experience and sexual intercourse in the negative experience. She described differences in her willingness and experience of being pressured:

“In one i was in a caring relationship and i wanted to participate in the activity and in the other i felt like i was taken advantage of because i had just been dumped and i was vulnerable” (P#1202, F, age 20)

Another woman reported a similar reaction due to differences in what the other person said to get her consent in the positive experience (“You'll enjoy it. We can stop if you want to. Just try it”) and situational factors in the negative experience (“I felt like I had to because it was homecoming.”). In describing the difference between her experiences, she stated that although both involved an initial lack of desire,

“In the negative experience I felt highly pressured. I did not want to have sex but I agreed to anyway. In the positive experience I felt like I had more of a choice and eventually wanted to have sex.” (P#2031, F, age 18)

Moral conflict. A final theme in participants’ reflections on why one experience was more positive or negative than the other was in regards to feeling morally conflicted because of who the other person was or the other person’s relationship status. This theme was also discussed earlier in participants’ explanation for why some experiences had been negative. Both women and men reported concerns in this category. Some men reported negative reactions due

to having previously engaged in a romantic or sexual relationship with someone close to the other person in their negative experience: “[the positive] one was just a friend, the other [negative situation] was my ex girlfriends best friend” (P#1130, M, age 23)

Another man, quoted earlier, wrote that the distinction between the positive and negative situations was that in the negative situation, the other person was the mother of a female friend with whom he had previously engaged in sexual activity: “i just felt bad because i thought i was betraying my friend” (P#1169, M, age 21).

Participants also mentioned issues with morality as distinguishing between their positive and negative situations. Some referred to the fact that the other person was in a committed relationship with someone else. One woman compared a positive experience with a previously platonic friend with a negative experience with an ex-boyfriend with whom she was “supposed to be just friends” because he was in a new relationship:

“The positive one was better because morally what happened was okay. Unlike the negative one where morally is wasn't right because he has a girlfriend.” (P#1122, F, age 19)

A male participant reported a similar moral dilemma. His positive experience was with his girlfriend and he reported initially not wanting to engage in sexual intercourse due to feeling tired after two other sexual experiences with her the same day. However, in his negative experience, though he was attracted to his female friend, he had reservations due to her committed relationship with another man:

“One was a hookup with my girlfriend where it had happened, without consequence many times, the other happened with a friend, for the first time, drunk, while she had a boyfriend” (P#1082, M, age 19)

Conceding to the latter sexual encounter seems to have had a significant negative impact as he also commented that the negative experience is “highly regarded as one of the biggest mistakes I’ve ever made.”

Additional qualitative data. Although the quantitative data for participants who identified as gender variant could not be analyzed statistically due to the small group size, their qualitative narratives are documented below. Both individuals described negative experiences.

The first described being talked into kissing by a male:

[*Relationship with OP?*] “Very casual dating.” [*Situation?*] “We were kissing and cuddling, he wanted to try french kissing. French kissing just seems all around gross to me, so I wasn't very enthusiastic about the idea.” [*OP said?*] ““Don't knock it before you've tried it" argument.” [*Talked into?*] “French kissing.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “I kind of wanted to prove myself right, I mostly wanted to do it for him.” [*Why negative?*] “It was gross.” [*Any positive?*] “I did at least try it for him.” (P#2015, age 19, Genderfluid, Asexual, negative situation)

The second described a similar experience with a female:

[*Relationship with OP?*] “She and I had been "talking" for a few days and were considering possibly dating.” [*Situation?*] “She and I had been laying in my bed just hanging out, and she just wanted to kiss, but we hadn't kissed before so I made it seem like I wasn't paying attention to her cues that she was giving me. I didn't want it because I wasn't sure if I was comfortable with that level of intimacy at the time, especially because we hadn't been romantically involved for very long and I had just gotten out of a relationship prior to this.” [*OP said?*] “She didn't really say anything, but her body language is what kind of "coerced" me into it. I don't think she was doing it on purpose,

or for malicious intent however.” [*Talked into?*] “Making out.” [*Reasons agreed?*]
 “Because I didn't want to be seen as awkward or upset her.” [*Why negative?*] “Because
 it was too soon and I wasn't comfortable at all with the experience.” [*Any positive?*] “I
 mean, the act of kissing is nice, so the physical intimacy was okay. The emotional aspect
 of it is what made me very uncomfortable.” (P#1155, age 18, Non-binary, Asexual,
 negative situation)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine individuals' experiences with CUSA and characteristics that are associated with positive and negative reactions to these experiences. We also examined the prevalence of positive and negative experiences.

Prevalence of CUSA

In general, women were more likely than men to report negative experiences of CUSA. This pattern is consistent with the existing literature on the prevalence of verbal sexual coercion (e.g., Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; NISVS; Black et al., 2011; Mustapha & Muehlenhard, 2015). However, this study also examined positive experiences and women reported more of these experiences of CUSA as well. Additionally, though both women and men reported more positive experiences than negative experiences, this difference was significant only for men. That is, men were significantly more likely to report having been talked into a positive experience than a negative experience. These findings regarding men's experiences contradict two types of sex stereotypes, that all men always want sex and that all women are always passive (“gatekeepers”) in sexual interactions.

It is possible that, on average, men may not react as negatively as women to being talked into an initially unwanted sexual activity. This is consistent with findings from some research

discussed earlier in the paper. For example, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994) found that 47% of men reported little to no negative impact of their sexual coercion experiences—although it is notable that 23% of the men in that study reported strong negative reactions. Similarly, a study by Kernsmith and Kernsmith (2009) found that men were more likely than women to report positive emotional reactions (e.g., being happy, aroused, etc.) to their sexual coercion experiences. In contrast, women were more likely than men to report negative emotional reactions (e.g., being turned off, angry, etc.)—although, again, it is notable that Kernsmith and Kernsmith (2009) found that 92% of the men reported at least one negative reaction.

Comparisons of Participants' Positive and Negative Experiences

Relationship with the other person. One variable we explored as a potential difference in women's and men's positive and negative experiences was their relationship with the other person at the time of the sexual experience. We found that women's experiences with someone they were casually dating or "talking" to were significantly more likely to be negative than positive. The qualitative data from women who discussed unmet relationship expectations as part of the reason their negative experiences were such might be relevant to this finding. As discussed earlier, some women (and no men) reported experiencing negative affect after their casual relationship with the other person did not lead to a more committed relationship after the sexual experience as they had hoped for. This could be one explanation for why women's experiences with casual dating partners were more likely to be negative. Another explanation may be related to sexual pleasure. Some studies (e.g., Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012) have found that both women and men report that men are more likely to put effort into a woman's sexual pleasure when it occurs in a committed relationship than in casual relationships

(e.g., “hooking up”). This explanation would be consistent with some women’s narratives on why lack of personal sexual pleasure contributed to why their negative experiences were such.

Although this comparison for men was nonsignificant, it is interesting that the pattern was in the opposite direction. That is, of the eight men who reported an experience with someone they were casually dating or “talking” to, the majority reported that the experience had been positive rather than negative. Possibly, with a larger sample of men, especially men reporting negative experiences, this pattern would be significant. There were also two trends in women’s relationships with the other person that may be worth pursuing in future studies. Women’s experiences with someone they just met were more likely to be considered negative than positive. Inversely, their experiences with someone they were in a committed relationship with were more likely to be positive than negative.

It is thus possible that specific characteristics of committed relationships, such as pre-existing affection for the other person and investment in the relationship, influence individuals’ conceptualization of their experiences. This is consistent with the previously reviewed literature on relationship investment. For example, as discussed earlier, Katz et al. (2006) found that verbally coerced women reported greater investment in their relationships than noncoerced women and may conceptualize it as something done for the greater good of the relationship. This is also consistent with the qualitative responses of some women (and some men) in this study regarding how conceding to engage in sexual activity in their positive experience was beneficial for their relationship with the other person (e.g., increased intimacy or other desired relationship outcomes). It is also interesting that in regards to their negative experiences, some participants identified their pre-existing positive feelings towards the other person as a positive aspect and discussed how it buffered some of their negative reaction.

Sexual behaviors involved. We also explored the impact different sexual activities may have had on whether an experience was considered positive or negative. We found no significant differences in the sexual behaviors involved between positive and negative experiences for either women or men. Most participants' positive and negative experiences involved penile-vaginal penetration (PVI). It was thus not the case that the large majority of negative experiences involved PVI, while the positive experiences involved potentially "milder" behaviors such as kissing/making out. Instead, these results reflect how the same behaviors, i.e., sexual intercourse, can have varying meanings for different individuals.

Reasons for not wanting. It was possible that certain reasons for not wanting to engage in the sexual experience, at least initially, would be associated with more positive or more negative reactions. Some reasons may be more amenable to change in the moment (e.g., not being in the mood) than others (e.g., wanting to be married before engaging in sexual activity). We found that men were significantly more likely to report for their negative than positive experiences that the situation involved sexual activity they did not want to do with anyone. This difference was not significant for women. It is notable that the small group of men ($n = 4$) who reported this reason in their negative experiences all discussed through the open-ended questions how they experienced conflicts with their values and morals in regards to engaging in sexual activity before marriage or with someone they did not know well or have a strong emotional attachment with. Similarly, although not statistically significant, there was a trend of men being more likely to report for their negative experiences than for their positive experiences that the sexual experience was unwanted because they had wanted to wait until marriage. This further contradicts sexual myths overgeneralizing men's readiness for sexual activity.

How the other person tried to talk participants into the sexual activity. We also examined whether the verbal strategies the other person used would differ significantly across positive and negative experiences. We explored both positive (e.g., attempting to convince the participant that the sexual activity would be fun) and negative approaches (e.g., trying to make the participant feel guilty or inadequate). We found that only negative approaches distinguished between positive and negative experiences. Women were more likely to report that other person had tried to induce negative emotions (e.g., trying to make them feel guilty or inadequate; accusing them of being a tease) in their negative situations than in their positive situations. Additionally, both women and men were more likely to report that other person had badgered them (e.g., asking repeatedly; saying that they really, really wanted it) in their negative situations than in their positive situations. Therefore, although both positive and negative experiences involved the use of positive verbal strategies, one difference in how people responded is whether these experiences also involved negative approaches (i.e., approaches intended to induce negative affect). Future research on the role, if any, of the sequencing of verbal approaches may explain some of this difference. It is possible, for example, that in experiences of CUSA, the other person generally begins with positively-framed approaches and then adapts negatively-framed approaches in the former were not effective for obtaining consent.

This finding regarding verbal approaches may also be related to the previously discussed findings on the impact of the type of relationship women had with the other person on their reaction to the sexual experience. It could be that women's differing negative and positive reactions to CUSA experiences in casual or committed relationships may be because partners who are interested in sustaining a committed relationship may be more likely to use positively-framed verbal strategies. The narratives provided by women who described their partners'

positive approaches (e.g., establishing safety, reassurance that that activity could be terminated if so desired, expressing understanding of concerns, etc.) could support this explanation. Future studies could further examine whether there are specific characteristics of more committed relationships (that are not generally associated with more casual relationships), which may explain differences in affective reactions.

Reasons for agreeing. Additionally, we examined similarities and differences in participants' reported reasons for eventually conceding to engage in the sexual experience. Similar to verbal strategies used by the other person, these reasons could be based on positive or negative affect. We found that women were significantly more likely to report that they agreed to participate in their negative experiences (than their positive ones) because they felt guilty or inadequate or in order to end the badgering from the other person. In contrast, women were significantly more likely to have agreed to their positive experiences (than their negative ones) for anticipated positive personal outcomes. For men, none of the reasons for agreeing significantly distinguished their positive and negative experiences.

Role of intoxication. Finally, we explored whether participants own intoxication or that of the other person had an impact on their reactions to their experiences. The majority of our sample denied that they or the other person was intoxicated around the time of the experience. We found no significant difference in participants' reports of theirs or the other person's intoxication across the positive and negative experiences for either women or men. The purpose of this study was to examine experiences in which a person does eventually consent. Therefore, the data of participants who reported that they were too intoxicated to be able to legally consent were exempt. It is still interesting that in a college sample, most participants reported that neither they nor the other person had been drinking.

Multidimensional Model of Wantedness.

Peterson and Muehlenhard's (2007) model for conceptualizing wantedness described earlier in this paper is useful for understanding participants' experiences. First, conceptualizing wantedness as continuous and multidimensional recognizes that sexual activity can be both wanted and unwanted for different reasons. For example, in this study, some participants discussed wanting the sexual activity in some ways (e.g., sexual attraction), but not wanting it in other ways (e.g., they were in an uncommitted relationship with the person, or engaging would create moral conflicts). Similarly, the act-consequences distinction in the model is relevant to this study. For instance, some women and men described not wanting to engage in the sexual activity, but wanting its possible outcomes (e.g., pleasing their partner or relationship commitment). Similarly, others reported not wanting the act and also not wanting either perceived or explicitly expressed consequences (e.g., displeasure of the other person or relationship termination). Finally, the wanting-consenting distinction from the model is important as participants in this study reported not wanting to engage in the sexual activity, at least initially, but consented to do so anyway. Some described agreeing because their wantedness changed, while others reported that despite conceding, the activity remained unwanted.

Additional Findings: Definitional Ambiguity.

Although separate from the primary purpose of this study, a reoccurring issue in data analysis was definitional ambiguity of CUSA. Participants were provided with our operational definition of CUSA and were also provided examples of how verbal pressure could be used in order to elicit consent for sexual activity. However, participants' interpretations did not always align with this definition. That is, some participants reported that they agreed to participate in

sexual activity that was, at least initially, unwanted, but then described experiences that did not meet this operational definition for a variety of reasons. The qualitative data were essential in clarifying the circumstances and whether verbal consent was given for the sexual experience. In fact, there were several participants whose data would have been included in the study analyses, based on how they responded to the quantitative questions. However, upon reading their qualitative data, it was determined that they were describing experiences outside the scope of the present study. So, though we repeatedly emphasized that for our study they eventually *agreed* to participate, several participants' data had to be excluded because it was not clear that they had actually agreed to the sexual experience at any point. In fact, many seemed to be describing experiences that would meet legal definitions of rape or sexual assault because of the use of physical force or because someone did something sexual to the participant while he or she was passed out, asleep, or too drunk or high to consent or resist.

In some cases, it was clear that the participant might not have read our operational definition clearly as they did not report verbally consenting:

[*Situation?*] “We were hooking up and I told him I didn't want to have sex but he did it anyways without listening to me.” [*OP said?*] “He didn't talk me into it, he just did it.”
(P#1056, F, 18)

As this woman did not verbally consent because the other person “just did it,” her data for this experience were not included in analyses. A similar decision was made for this following woman who also had not consented to sexual activity that occurred anyway, presumably due to physical force:

[*Situation?*] “i was intoxicated and he was "taking care" of me when i was drunk, he wanted a blow job and i didn't want to because i was drunk and did not like him.” [*OP*

said?] “he said that i'm drunk and saying no for no reason” [*Reasons agreed?*] “he put my mouth on his privates” (P#1004, F, 18)

This third woman described an experience she said “traumatized me for years”:

“[*Situation?*] Talking and kissing, and I did not want him to perform digital sex to me but he forced me to physically and told me it would feel good.” [*Reasons agreed?*] “He was physically forceful and I thought it would be inappropriate to say no.” (P#1041, F, 20)

Though it is hard to know from this text why she thought saying no would be “inappropriate,” if it is based on harmful gender socialization, it emphasizes the importance of sexual communication and assertiveness skills that address that issue.

In some other cases, the distinction was not as clear. For example, some participants used phrases that seemed to signify force (e.g., the other person “made” them participate), but would also describe verbally agreeing to participate in the sexual activity. For example, this woman described a situation with a boyfriend:

[*Why negative?*] “I didn't want to have sex with him but he made me have sex with him. I was uncomfortable the entire time and did not like it.” [*Reason agreed?*] “I agreed because he was my boyfriend and he really wanted to have sex with me.” (P#1135, F, 18)

One factor that contributed to definitional ambiguity was substance use. Although the majority of women and men denied that they or the other person had used alcohol shortly before or during the sexual experience, for those that did report drinking, it was sometimes unclear how much of an impact alcohol had on their consent. In other cases, it seemed more apparent that the participant was unable to legally consent due to the use of alcohol. The clearest example of that was a woman who described what seemed like a rape experience with a “one-night stand, tinder match,” yet even some parts of her narrative was unclear:

[*Situation?*] “Alcohol led to the situation” [*OP said?*] “I was black out drunk and my friend told me to hook up with someone and I did” [*Why negative?*] “At one point my nether regions went dry and it was like sand paper and I was on the verge of tears it hurt so bad and asked repeatedly for him to stop but he didn't” [*Any positive?*] “Yeah, because I've hooked up with two of his frat brothers and I take casual sex VERY casually so I thought it was funny” (P#1210, F, 18)

So, though her description of a positive aspect of this situation seemed unusual in light of the rest of her narrative, it was decided that her data should be exempt from analyses.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a fairly homogenous, unmarried college-aged sample. It is possible that experiences of CUSA could vary according to age group. For example, certain verbal approaches of convincing the other person may affect older, married participants differently (e.g., threatening to leave the relationship). Additionally, verbal pressure may occur in unique circumstances with an older sample. For instance, Peterson (2013, November) found that in couples dealing with infertility, many of the men reported feeling sexually coerced when they did not want to engage in sexual intercourse, but felt obligated or pressured to do so for fertility purposes. Future comparative studies with older samples could examine unique characteristics of their experiences.

Additionally, there was a small sample of men, especially those reporting negative experiences. This resulted in low statistical power for some analyses and it was more difficult to analyze characteristics of their negative experiences. Future studies may benefit from oversampling men to avoid these issues.

Implications

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the research literature by providing information about characteristics of experiences of conceding to sexual activity that may be associated with more positive or more negative reactions. This study has implications for sexual coercion prevention, clinical practice and future and research. As these results demonstrate, both women and men may experience verbal pressure to engage in sexual activity. Though these experiences would likely not meet legal definitions of rape that are centered on lack of consent or use of physical force, they can still result in negative reactions for some women and some men.

As reviewed earlier in this paper, many studies that include verbal coercion as a form of sexual victimization have found similar results. For example, the Sexual Experience Survey (Koss et al., 2007; Koss et al. 1987; Koss & Oros, 1982) defines sexual coercion as unwanted sexual behavior obtained by verbal pressure (e.g., threats to end the relationship, continual arguments, showing displeasure, or criticizing someone's sexuality or attractiveness). The CDC's study of sexual violence (the NISVS) defines sexual coercion as "unwanted sexual penetration that occurs after a person is pressured in a nonphysical way ... [including] being worn down by someone who repeatedly asked for sex or showed they were unhappy; ... [or] having someone threaten to end a relationship" (Black et al., 2011, p. 17). The types of verbal pressure included in these studies focus exclusively on *negative* types of pressure. In line with that, the present study found that these negative types of pressure were associated with negative rather than positive experiences. However, this study also found that many situations in which someone initially did not want a sexual activity, but was talked into it were experienced as generally positive.

Therefore, it is important not to assume that all instances of being talked into sexual activity are experienced as negative as individuals can have a variety of reactions to such experiences and it is important to understand variables that contribute to these different reactions. In addition, the language used in clinical practice and in prevention efforts should be mindful to not conflate wantedness and willingness (i.e., consent) and should instead reflect the multidimensional conceptualization of wantedness. Finally, future intervention efforts focusing on healthy sexual communication and assertively setting boundaries in relationships may be especially useful for college populations such as these.

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Appendix A

Q1 Important: Remember, do not put your name or KU ID, or any names or other identifiable information, on the survey. If you DO provide any identifiable information in the open-ended survey questions, then your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Any identifiable information about individuals affiliated with KU regarding sexual assault will be reported to the necessary departments per KU policy. So, to summarize: Do not put your name or KU ID on the survey.

Q2 Your age _____

Q3 Your gender

- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Gender variant (3) _____

Q4 Race/Ethnicity: (check one)

- African American/Black (1)
- Asian American/Asian (2)
- Biracial/Multiracial (3)
- European American/White (4)
- Hispanic American/Latino/Latina (5)
- Native American/American Indian (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q5 What year of school are you in?

- Freshman (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)
- Graduate Student (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q6 What is your sexual orientation?

- Asexual (1)
- Bisexual (2)
- Heterosexual (3)
- Lesbian/Gay (4)
- Unsure/Questioning (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q7 Relationship Status

- Married or living with a life partner (1)
- Living with a partner (2)
- Involved exclusively with one person (3)
- Dating primarily one person (4)
- Dating occasionally (5)
- Dating more than one person (6)
- Not dating or involved with anyone (7)
- Other (Please Specify): (8) _____

Q8 Comments, if any:

Q9 Sometimes two people are “on separate pages” about their desire for sexual activity. Also, people can have a variety of reactions to their sexual experiences.

Q10 For this study, sexual activity could include: • kissing or making out • performing or receiving oral sex • performing or receiving genital touching • sexual intercourse (penile-vaginal intercourse) • anal sex • sending sexual pictures/videos of yourself • making a sex tape • or any other sexual activity

Q11 Think of a situation in which

- a person does not want to engage in a sexual activity,
- but their partner does want to, and
- the person agrees to go ahead and engage in the sexual activity

Q12 For what reasons, if any, might someone feel good about agreeing to engage in sexual activity that they initially did not want?

Q13 For what reasons, if any, might someone not feel good about agreeing to engage in sexual activity that they initially did not want?

Q14 Comments, if any:

Q15 In this study, we will ask about two situations:

A situation in which

- you initially did not want to engage in a sexual activity, but
- someone talked you into it, and
- you felt generally positive after the experience?

and

A situation in which

- you initially did not want to engage in a sexual activity, but
- someone talked you into it, and
- you felt generally negative after the experience?

Q16 Examples of ways someone may talk another person into sexual activity include: • making you feel guilty or inadequate, • promising a reward or other positive outcome, • asking repeatedly, • reassuring you that the activity would be pleasurable, • threatening to leave or go outside the relationship, • discussing compromise, • etc.

Q17 Remember, sexual activity could include: • kissing or making out • performing or receiving oral sex • performing or receiving sexual touching • sexual intercourse • anal sex • sending sexual pictures/videos of yourself • making a sex tape • and/or any other sexual activity

Q18 Have you ever been in a situation in which

- you initially did not want to engage in a sexual activity, but
 - someone talked you into it, and
 - you felt generally positive about the experience?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block

Q19 Answer these questions about the experience you felt generally positive after

Q20 What was your relationship with the other person at the time?

Q21 Describe the situation, be sure to include: • What led up to the situation • The sexual activity the other person wanted • Why you initially did not want the activity

Q22 What did the other person say to talk you into the activity?

Q23 What sexual activity/activities did the other person talk you into?

Q24 What were the reason(s) that you agreed to engage in the sexual activity?

Q25 What made you feel generally positive about the experience?

Q26 Even though you felt generally positive about the experience, did you have any negative feelings about it? If so, what made you feel that way?

Q27 Is there anything else you would like to say about this situation?

Q28 Keeping the same situation in mind, answer these follow-up questions.

Q29 What was the sex/gender of the other person?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Gender Variant (3) _____

Q30 Which of the following best describes your relationship with the other person, at that time?

- We just met (1)
- Hooking up (2)
- Acquaintances (not sexual prior to that) (3)
- Friends (not sexual prior to that) (4)
- Friends with benefits (5)
- We had been “talking” (6)
- Casually dating (7)
- In a committed relationship (8)
- Living together as partners (9)
- Married (10)
- Other (11) _____

Q31 Which of the following sexual behaviors did the other person talk you into? Check all that apply:

- Kissing/Making out (1)
- Performing oral sex (2)
- Receiving oral sex (3)
- Performing genital touching (4)
- Receiving genital touching (5)
- Sexual intercourse (penile-vaginal intercourse) (6)
- Anal sex (7)
- Sending sexual pictures/videos of yourself (8)
- Making a sex tape (9)
- Other sexual activity (please specify): (10) _____

Q32 For the behavior(s) you selected above, you and the other person had...

- ...done it/all of them together before (1)
- ...done some of them together before (2)
- ...done none of them together before (3)
- Other (please specify): (4) _____

Q33 Why did you initially not want to engage in the sexual activity (check all that apply):

- I did not want to do the sexual activity with anyone. (1)
- I did not want to do the sexual activity with that specific person. (2)
- I did not want to do the sexual activity in that specific context/situation. (3)
- I did not want to do the sexual activity until the relationship was right (e.g., until we were in an exclusive relationship, until I was more comfortable with the person, etc.) (4)
- I did not want to do the sexual activity until I was married. (5)
- I wasn't in the mood. (6)
- I did not want my relationship with the other person to become sexual. (7)
- I felt too intoxicated. (8)
- The other person seemed too intoxicated. (9)
- Other reason (please specify): (10) _____

Q34 How did the other person talk you into sexual activity? Check all that apply:

- Trying to make you feel guilty or inadequate (e.g., saying you were being a bad girlfriend/boyfriend) (1)
- Promising to do something you wanted in exchange (2)
- Asking repeatedly (3)
- Reassuring you that the activity would be pleasurable for you (4)
- Threatening to break up with you or go outside the relationship for sexual activity (5)
- Discussing compromise (e.g., saying that compromise is part of any relationship, reminding you of times in the past that they have done something for you) (6)
- Saying that they really, really want it (7)
- Saying that they would appreciate it (8)
- The other person accused me of leading them on/being a tease. (10)
- Saying that it would make the relationship stronger (11)
- Other way (please specify): (9) _____

Q35 Why did you agree to engage in the sexual activity (check all that apply):

- The other person had done the same for me before (1)
- I wanted to make the relationship stronger (2)
- Compromise is part of any relationship (3)
- The other person guilted me into it (4)
- To get the other person to stop asking (5)
- So the other person would not break up with me or go outside the relationship for sexual activity (6)
- The other person convinced me that it would be pleasurable (7)
- It was just easier to agree (8)
- I was turned on (9)
- I decided I was ready (11)
- The other person was attractive (12)
- I felt like I led the other person on / I didn't want to be a tease. (14)
- So the other person would do something I wanted in exchange (15)
- To make the other person happy (16)
- Because I wanted more sexual experience (17)
- I felt obligated because of the relationship (18)
- I didn't want to seem sexually inadequate. (19)
- Other reason (please specify): (10) _____

Q36 Had you been drinking shortly before or during this experience?

- No, I had not been drinking. (1)
- Yes, but I did not feel intoxicated. (2)
- Yes, and I felt intoxicated. (3)
- I don't remember. (4)

- Other: (5) _____

Q37 Had the other person been drinking shortly before or during this experience?

- No, he/she had not been drinking. (1)
- Yes, but he/she did not seem intoxicated. (2)
- Yes, and he/she seemed intoxicated. (3)
- I don't remember/I don't know. (4)
- Other: (5) _____

Q38 In your opinion, how much (if at all) did this situation seem more like...

	0 (1)	1 (2)	2 (3)	3 (4)	4 (5)	5 (6)	6 (7)
...compromise (1)							
...coercion (pressure) (2)							

Q39 How negative or positive do you regard this situation?

	-3 (1)	-2 (2)	-1 (3)	0 (4)	1 (5)	2 (6)	3 (7)
very negative:very positive (1)							

Q40 INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate to what extent you had the following thoughts or feelings shortly after the experience.

	I did not think/feel this at all. (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	I thought/felt this a lot. (6)
Distressed (1)						
Depressed (2)						
Angry at myself (3)						
Ashamed (5)						
Betrayed (6)						
Angry with the other person (7)						
Guilty (8)						
Disgusted with the other person (9)						
Loving toward the other person (43)						
Caring toward the other person (10)						
Disappointed with the other person (11)						
Sad (12)						
Resentful (13)						
Uncomfortable with the other person (14)						
Disappointed with myself (15)						
Attracted to the other person (16)						
Worthless (17)						

<p>Used (18)</p> <p>Lonely (19)</p> <p>Disgusted with myself (20)</p> <p>I still like her/him. (21)</p> <p>I'm a good partner. (22)</p> <p>I'm glad I did it. (23)</p> <p>I felt happy that I satisfied the other person. (24)</p> <p>I don't regret it. (25)</p> <p>I felt more liked by the other person. (26)</p> <p>I felt sexy. (27)</p> <p>It did not matter/It was not a big deal. (28)</p> <p>I should have been able to say no. (29)</p> <p>I showed the other person how much I cared about them (30)</p> <p>I felt satisfied. (31)</p> <p>It was my fault. (32)</p> <p>It really was not so terrible. (33)</p>						
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<p>We both ended up getting something we wanted. (34)</p> <p>I felt attractive. (35)</p> <p>I wish I had stood up for myself. (36)</p> <p>I felt hopeful about the relationship. (37)</p> <p>I felt closer to the other person. (38)</p> <p>I felt accepted by the other person. (39)</p>						
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Previous questions were repeated in regards to an experience about which they felt generally negative. The questions regarding positive and negative experiences were counterbalanced.

Next two questions were displayed only to those who reported both positive and negative experiences

Q64 What was different about these two situations that made one more negative or positive than the other?

Q65 Is there anything else you would like us to know about these experiences?

Q66 Do you have any other comments about this study?

Appendix B

Participants were asked several closed-ended questions regarding characteristics of their positive and negative experiences of CUSA.

First, participants were asked about the gender of the other person involved. These data are represented in Table B1 below. Consistent with fact that the majority of participants' identified as heterosexual (91%), most women reported that the other person was male, and men reported that the other person was female. Very few participants discussed sexual experiences with someone of their same gender.

Table B1

Sex of the Other Person Across Positive and Negative Experiences

Sex of the other person	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
What was the sex/gender of the other person?				
Male	95%	100%	5%	11%
Female	5%	0%	95%	89%
Gender variant	0%	0%	0%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

The questionnaire had also asked participants to indicate their relationship with the other person, choosing from one response from a list of possible responses. During data analysis, we grouped these responses into categories (see Table B2): someone they had *just met*; someone with whom they had a *nonsexual relationship* (e.g., an acquaintance or platonic friend); someone with whom they had a relationship that was *primarily sexual* (e.g., a hookup, friends with benefits); someone with whom they had a *casual relationship* (i.e., a relationship that was romantic or sexual—or potentially romantic or sexual—but that was not yet a committed

relationship, such as someone they had been “talking” with or casually dating); or someone with whom they were in a committed relationship (e.g., living together as partners or married).

Table B2

Participants’ Relationship with Other Person

	Women’s experiences		Men’s experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
Which of the following best describes your relationship with the other person, at that time?				
Just met	3%	12%	2%	16%
Nonsexual relationship:				
Acquaintances [not sexual prior to that]	21%	20%	26%	53%
Friends [not sexual prior to that]				
Sex-based relationship:				
Hooking up	11%	6%	12%	0%
Friends with benefits				
Casual relationship:				
We had been “talking”	14%	33%	19%	5%
Casually dating				
Committed relationship:				
In a committed relationship	49%	27%	40%	21%
Living together as partners				
Married	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	2%	2%	0%	5%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

The women who reported a negative experience most often reported that it had occurred in a casual relationship (33%); however, more than a quarter (27%) reported that their negative experience had occurred in a committed relationship, and a fifth (20%) reported that it had occurred in a previously nonsexual relationship (e.g., with a friend). In contrast, more than half of the men who reported a negative experience reported that it occurred in previously nonsexual

relationships (e.g., with a friend). However, for positive experiences, both women and men were most likely to report experiences that occurred in committed relationships.

Participants were also asked to indicate the sexual behaviors they were talked into, choosing from a list of possible responses. Participants were able to choose more than one option as applicable. For data analysis, we grouped these responses into the following categories (see Table B3): *kissing/making out*, *genital contact* (e.g., performing or receiving oral sex or genital touching) excluding penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI), *sexual intercourse* (i.e., PVI), performing or receiving *anal sex*, and creating and/or sending *sexual media* (e.g., sending sexual pictures or videos of themselves or making a sex video with the other person).

Table B3

Sexual Behaviors Across Positive and Negative Experiences

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Which of the following sexual behaviors did the other person talk you into? Check all that apply:				
Kissing/making out	64% (40)	61% (30)	72% (31)	74% (14)
Performing oral sex	38% (24)	41% (20)	40% (17)	26% (5)
Receiving oral sex	32% (20)	25% (12)	61% (26)	68% (13)
Performing genital touching	40% (25)	31% (15)	44% (19)	58% (11)
Receiving genital touching	48% (30)	39% (19)	54% (23)	63% (12)
Sexual intercourse (penile-vaginal intercourse)	65% (41)	53% (26)	72% (31)	47% (9)
Anal Sex	3% (2)	4% (2)	7% (3)	5% (1)
Sexual Media:				
Sending sexual pictures/videos of yourself	6% (4)	8% (4)	5% (2)	0% (0)
Making a sex tape				
Other sexual activity	2% (1)	0% (0)	7% (3)	0% (0)

Note. Total percentages may be greater than 100 as participants were able to select more than one response.

Across both positive and negative experiences, women and men most commonly reported being talked into PVI. However, men reported other non-PVI genital activity nearly as frequently as PVI as the behavior they were talked into in their negative experiences.

Another close-ended question was in regards to participants' reasons for not wanting to engage in the sexual activity, at least initially. Participants selected one or more reasons from a list of options. The data for this question are presented in Table B4. This long list was

condensed into the following categories for data analyses: the sexual act was *undesired with anyone*; *relationship-related reasons* (e.g., they desired to maintain a platonic relationship, they did not want to engage in the sexual act until they were in a committed relationship with the other person or otherwise felt more comfortable with them, etc.); reasons relating to *situational factors* (e.g., they were not in the mood or they did not want to engage in the sexual activity in that specific context); or reasons relating to *intoxication* (i.e., they or the other person was too intoxicated).

Table B4

Participants Reasons for not Wanting to Engage in the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Why did you initially not want to engage in the sexual activity? Check all that apply:				
Undesired act with anyone:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity with anyone.	11% (7)	14% (7)	0% (0)	21% (4)
Relationship-related reasons:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity with that specific person.				
I did not want to do the sexual activity until the relationship was right (e.g., until we were in an exclusive relationship, until I was more comfortable with the person, etc.)	43% (27)	57% (28)	28% (12)	47% (9)
I did not want my relationship with the other person to become sexual.				
Waiting until marriage:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity until I was married.	10% (6)	6% (3)	2% (1)	16% (3)
Situational factors:				
I did not want to do the sexual activity in that specific context/situation.	64% (40)	67% (33)	61% (26)	68% (13)
I wasn't in the mood.				
Intoxication:				
I felt too intoxicated.	3% (2)	8% (4)	7% (3)	26% (6)
The other person seemed too intoxicated.				
Other reasons	13% (8)	16% (8)	16% (7)	5% (1)

Note. Total percentages may be greater than 100 as participants were able to select more than one response.

These data reflect a similarity in the positive and negative experiences in that both women and men most frequently identified situational factors, such as not being in the mood, as

the reason for which they did not want to engage in the sexual activity. The next most frequent category of reasons across both types of experiences was based on participants' relationship with the other person at that time (e.g., they did not want a sexual relationship with that individual).

Additionally, participants were asked to select applicable ways in which the other person talked them into engaging in the sexual activity. Again, for analysis purposes these options were organized into categories (see Table B5): verbal strategies intended to *induce negative emotions* (e.g., attempts to induce guilt, threatening to terminate the relationship or engage in sexual activity outside of it); strategies intended to *induce positive emotions* (e.g., expressing that the sexual activity would be pleasurable for the participant); strategies involving *bargaining* (e.g., discussing compromise); and strategies of *insistence* (e.g., repeated requests).

Table B5
Reported Verbal Strategies Used by the Other Person

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63) % (<i>n</i>)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49) % (<i>n</i>)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43) % (<i>n</i>)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19) % (<i>n</i>)
How did the other person talk you into sexual activity? Check all that apply:				
Trying to induce negative emotions:				
Trying to make you feel guilty or inadequate (e.g., saying you were being a bad girlfriend/boyfriend)	11% (7)	41% (20)	9% (4)	21% (4)
The other person accused me of leading them on/being a tease.				
Badgering/pleading:				
Asking repeatedly	44% (28)	72% (36)	58% (25)	95% (18)
Saying that they really, really want				

Table B5

Reported Verbal Strategies Used by the Other Person

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
How did the other person talk you into sexual activity? Check all that apply:				
Threatening to break up with you or go outside the relationship for sexual activity	0% (0)	4% (2)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Expressing that it would be good for the relationship: Saying that it would make the relationship stronger Discussing compromise (e.g., saying that compromise is part of any relationship, reminding you of times in the past that they have done something for you) Saying that they would appreciate it	43% (27)	43% (21)	33% (14)	26% (5)
Convincing you that it would be fun: Reassuring you that the activity would be pleasurable for you	60% (38)	51% (25)	47% (20)	68% (13)
Bargaining: Promising to do something you wanted in exchange	3% (2)	12% (6)	12% (5)	21% (4)
Other strategy	24% (15)	14% (7)	14% (6)	11% (2)

Note. Total percentages may be greater than 100 as participants were able to select more than one response.

There was another pattern of similarities in the positive and negative experiences. The most frequently reported verbal strategy in either experience, for both women and men, was repeated requests and other ways the other person insisted on his or her desire for the sexual activity. The second most common strategy in women's and men's positive experiences was the other person trying to induce positive emotions by saying, for example, that engaging in the sexual activity would strengthen the relationship.

Participants were presented with a list of reasons for which they decided to concede to participate in the sexual activity and asked to select any that were applicable to their experience. For analyses (see Table B6), these options were organized into three categories: reasons relating to making the *relationship stronger* (e.g., maintaining balance or fairness, or making the other person happy); reasons reflecting *relationship obligation or avoiding anticipated negative outcomes* (e.g., so the other person would not terminate the relationship or seek sexual activity outside of it or to get the other person to stop asking); and reasons relating to anticipated personal positive outcomes (e.g., they were convinced that the experience would be pleasurable or they wanted more sexual experience).

Table B6

Participants Reasons for Agreeing to Engage in the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (n = 63)	Negative (n = 49)	Positive (n = 43)	Negative (n = 19)
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Why did you agree to engage in the sexual activity? Check all that apply:				
Negative affect:				
The other person guilted me into it				
I felt like I led the other person on / I didn't want to be a tease.	19% (12)	55% (27)	16% (7)	37% (7)
I didn't want to seem sexually inadequate.				
Stopping request(s):				
It was just easier to agree				
To get the other person to stop asking	25% (16)	67% (33)	37% (16)	47% (9)
Avoiding break-up or infidelity:				
So the other person would not break up with me or go outside the relationship for sexual activity	3% (2)	10% (5)	0% (0)	5% (1)
For the good of the relationship:				
I wanted to make the relationship stronger				
Compromise is part of any relationship				
The other person had done the same for me before	60% (38)	59% (29)	58% (25)	32% (6)
To make the other person happy				
I felt obligated because of the relationship				

Table B6

Participants Reasons for Agreeing to Engage in the Sexual Activity

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Why did you agree to engage in the sexual activity? Check all that apply:				
Anticipated personal positive outcomes:				
The other person convinced me that it would be pleasurable				
I was turned on	87% (55)	45% (22)	74% (32)	68% (13)
I decided I was ready				
The other person was attractive				
Because I wanted more sexual experience				
Bargaining:				
So the other person would do something I wanted in exchange	0% (0)	4% (2)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Other reasons	0% (0)	6% (3)	5% (2)	0% (0)

Note. Total percentages may be greater than 100 as participants were able to select more than one response.

In regards to their positive experiences, women and men were alike in that they largely reported that they agreed to engage in sexual activity for anticipated personal positive outcomes. There were some gender differences in regards to the negative experiences. Most women reported conceding to their negative experiences because they felt obligated to do so because of the relationship or to avoid perceived negative outcomes such as a break-up. Their second most common reason for conceding was for anticipated personal positive outcomes (e.g., they were

convinced it would be pleasurable). The most frequently reported reason men conceded to their negative experience was anticipated personal positive outcomes.

We sought to assess what role, if any, alcohol use had on participants' experiences. Participants were first asked about their own alcohol use around the time of the sexual experience with options to select that they had no alcohol, that they had some but were not intoxicated, that they had some and did feel intoxicated, or that they do not recall. These data are presented in Table B7. On the whole, women reported that they had not been drinking around the time of either their negative or positive experience. The same was true for generally men; however, several did report drinking and feeling intoxicated shortly before or during their negative experiences.

Table B7

Participants' Alcohol Use Around the Time of the Experience

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (<i>n</i> = 63)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 49)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 43)	Negative (<i>n</i> = 19)
Had you been drinking shortly before or during this experience?				
No, I had not been drinking.	76%	80%	67%	53%
Yes, but I did not feel intoxicated.	11%	6%	12%	11%
Yes, and I felt intoxicated.	11%	14%	19%	37%
I don't remember.	2%	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	2%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Participants were also asked a parallel question regarding their perception of the other person's alcohol use around the time of the experience (see Table B8). The same pattern was found in participants' reports of the other person's substance use. In general, women and men

denied that the other person had been drinking before or during both their negative and positive experiences. However, a smaller amount of men did report that the other person in their negative experiences had been drinking and seemed intoxicated.

Table B8

The Other Person's Alcohol Use Around the Time of the Experience

	Women's experiences		Men's experiences	
	Positive (n = 63)	Negative (n = 49)	Positive (n = 43)	Negative (n = 19)
Had the other person been drinking shortly before or during this experience?				
No, he/she had not been drinking.	73%	73%	69%	53%
Yes, but he/she did not seem intoxicated.	16%	10%	17%	16%
Yes, and he/she seemed intoxicated.	11%	10%	12%	26%
I don't remember/I don't know.	0%	6%	0%	5%
Other	0%	0%	2%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%